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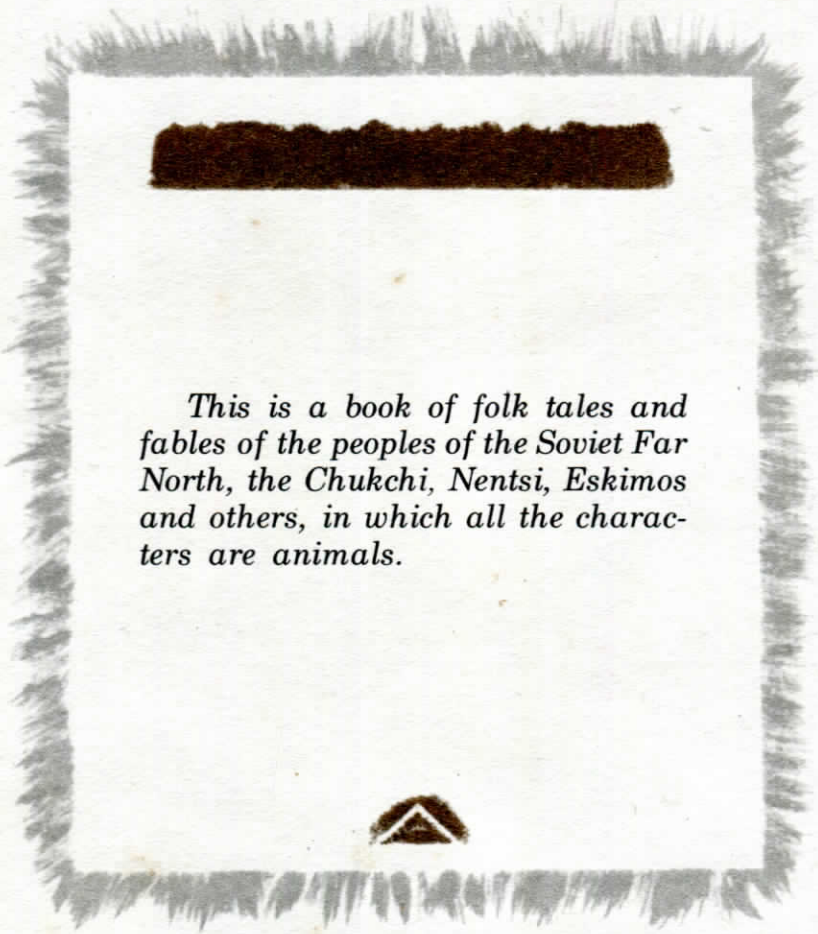
ANIMAL STORIES OF THE NORTH

KUTKHA THE RAVEN

Illustrated by Y. Rachov



Translated by Fainna Solasko



This is a book of folk tales and fables of the peoples of the Soviet Far North, the Chukchi, Nentsi, Eskimos and others, in which all the characters are animals.

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Malysh Publishers 1981



THE LOST SONG

It was spring. Two snow buntings returned to the cliffs of Bering Straits from the distant lands in the south. They built a nest on a high crag at the very edge of the sea.

Mother Snow Bunting laid an egg. She sat in the nest, warming the egg with her body, afraid to leave it for a moment for fear the cold wind would chill it. She shielded it from the rain and hardly ate or slept.

Finally, her little son hatched. He was such a fine, darling son. No other birds on the coast had a fledgling as handsome as he. His only fault was that he cried so much. Truly now, his parents had no time to eat or drink, or sleep. If his father flew off to find him food, his mother would croon to him. If his mother flew off, his father would bustle about.

One day Mother Bunting perched on the edge of the nest and sang her son a song:

Tweet-tweet, whose little toes are these?
Tweet-tweet, whose little wings are these?
Tweet-tweet, whose dear little head is this?
Tweet-tweet, whose dear little eyes are these?
Tweet-tweet, whose are they?

Raven was flying by just then. He heard the song, stopped nearby and listened in amazement. He had never heard such a beautiful song before. When it ended he said to Snow Bunting,

"Let me have your song. Give it to me!"

"Oh, no! I could never do that. It's the only song we have. We have no other."

"Please give it to me. I'll never be able to live without it now."

"My son can't fall asleep if I don't sing him his song so it's no use your asking. I can't give it to you."

"If you don't, I'll snatch it from you!" At this Raven swooped down, snatched Snow Bunting's song and flew away.

Just then Mother Bunting's little son began to squawk. She burst into tears. When Father Bunting returned from his hunt and saw his son wailing and his wife weeping he said,

"What's the matter? What happened?"

"It's too terrible for words," Mother Bunting replied. "Raven swooped down on us and carried off our song. Now our son will never fall asleep. He'll make himself sick with crying. What'll we do?"

Father Bunting became very angry. His eyes flashed. He stamped his foot. "Give me my hunting gloves, my big bow and my swift arrows! I'll find the thief. I'll snatch our song from his throat! Just wait."

Father Bunting flew off.

He passed many birds, but none of them were Raven. He saw Ptarmigan running among the rocks and heard Golden Plover whistling.

At last, spying a flock of ravens on the cliffs, he landed nearby, raised his bow and arrow and waited. He would shoot the one that sang his song.

However, none of the ravens were singing Snow Bunting's song or any other. The old birds were sunning themselves and gossiping, while the young were playing. Now and then one of them would caw, but that was no song!

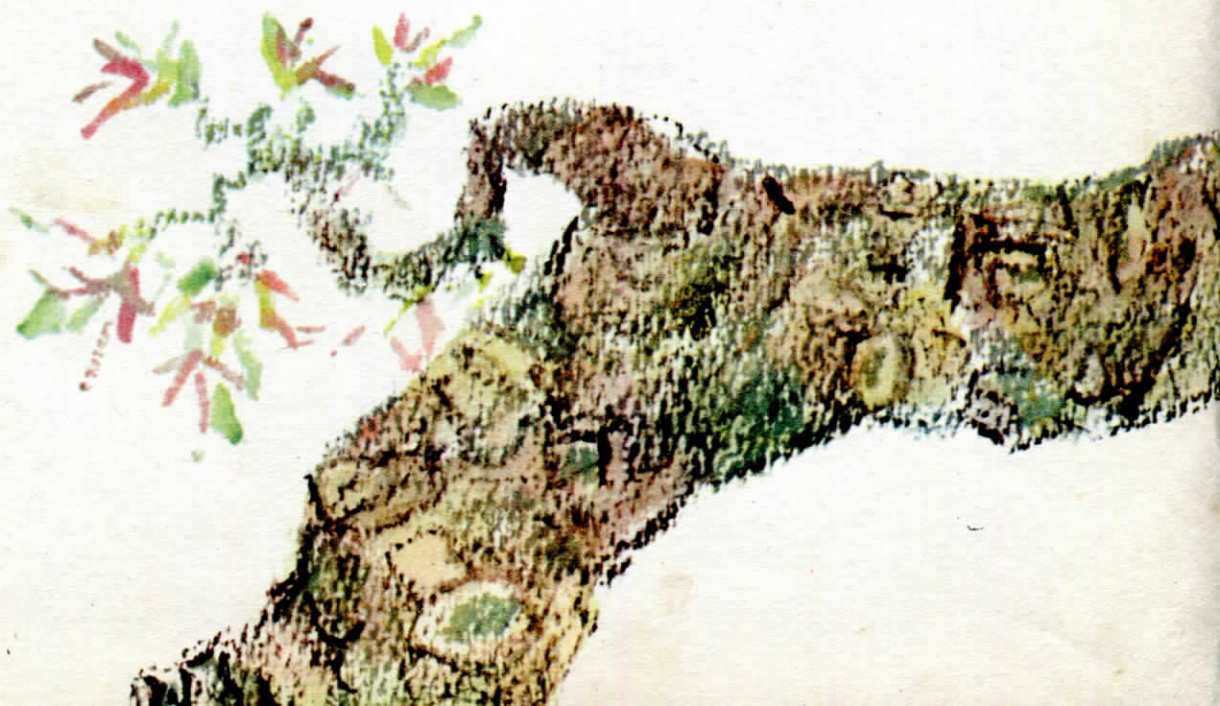
Father Bunting flew on, winging back and forth until he spotted a raven perched among the branches of a tree. Its beak was raised, its eyes were shut and it was swaying from side to side as it warbled sweetly:

Tweet-tweet, whose little toes are these?
Tweet-tweet, whose little wings are these?
Tweet-tweet, whose dear little head is this?
Tweet-tweet, whose dear little eyes are these?

Raven would get this far and then begin at the beginning again, swaying back and forth:

Tweet-tweet, whose little toes are these?
Tweet-tweet, whose little wings are these?

"There's the villain! There's the thief who stole the best song in the world!" Father Bunting cried.





Landing on a branch of the same tree, he let his arrow fly, but it merely slipped off Raven's hard wing feathers and fell to the ground. Raven never even noticed it, never even opened his eyes. He just kept on warbling.

Then Father Bunting took all his arrows from his quiver and began shooting them one after another at the thief.

Meanwhile, Raven sang on:

Oh! Tweet! Whose little toes are these?
Ow! Tweet! Whose little wings are these?
Ouch! Something hit me!
Oh, tweet! Whose dear little head is this?
Oww! Something's pricking me!
Oh! Tweet! Whose dear little eyes are these?
Oww! Help! Stop! Caw! Caw!

And Raven dropped the song.

Father Snow Bunting snatched it up and flew back to his nest. The closer he got, the louder were his son's wailing and his wife's weeping. "Stop crying! Stop weeping!" he called. "I've snatched our song from that thief, Raven. Here it is!"

Mother Bunting was overjoyed. She began singing her song. Her little son stopped wailing and fell asleep.

Now, whenever snow buntings see a raven, they at once stop singing. Not one will so much as open its beak. That is why they still have their song and why all snow buntings still sing it to their noisy children.





HARE

Hare liked to play in the sedge at the edge of a lake. One day as he was munching on a blade of sedge, he cut his lip. Hare became angry and went off to complain to Fire.

"Fire, burn down the sedge at the edge of the lake!"

"Why? What has Sedge done to you?"

"Cut my lip."

"It's your own fault. Greed made you eat too fast. That's why you cut your lip," Fire said.


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Hare became still angrier and went to Water. "Water, put out the fire!" he said.

"Why? What has Fire done to you?"

"Fire won't burn down the sedge at the edge of the lake!"

"What has Sedge done to you?"

"Cut my lip."

"It's your own fault. Greed made you eat too fast. That's why you cut your lip," Water said.

Hare became angrier than ever and went up to two boys who were playing with their bows and arrows. "Shoot the water, boys!" he said.

"Why? What has Water done to you?"

"Water won't put out the fire!"

"And what has Fire done to you?"

"Fire won't burn down the sedge at the edge of the lake!"

"And what has Sedge done to you?"

"Cut my lip!"

"It's your own fault. Greed made you eat too fast. That's why you cut your lip."

Now Hare was hopping mad. He went to Mouse and said, "Mouse, help me! Chew through the boys' bowstrings. Then they won't be able to shoot their arrows."

Mouse took pity on Hare and hurried off to chew through the boys' bowstrings. The boys became frightened. They grabbed up their bows and shot their arrows into the water. Water rose up and set off to put out the fire. Fire got scared and rushed at the sedge. Sedge caught fire, but Hare was bouncing about there. He became very frightened, dashed off and just barely escaped. However, the tips of his ears got singed. That is why all hares have black-tipped ears.



TRY TO CATCH ME

One summer day Vamyngu, a young frog, saw Crane standing on one leg, dozing.

"What a long-legged bird that is! I've never seen another like it," Vamyngu said to herself. She was a very curious frog and went hop-hop-hop to get a closer look.

Crane, meanwhile, was dozing and paying no attention to anything.

"Are you tired of standing on both legs, or does one leg ache?" Vamyngu asked. She was dying to know why Crane had the toes of one foot curled up into a fist.

"No, it doesn't ache," Crane replied grumpily. "I'm just sleepy."

"What's your name?" Vamyngu persisted.

"Siatylgak."

"Why are you cross?"

"I'm not."

"Then let's play, 'cause I've nothing to do."

"I've had my fill of playing."

"Then let's hop and jump."

"I've had my fill of hopping and jumping."

"Then let's have a race! I'll hop away, and you try to catch me."

"I've had my fill of catching."

"Whom did you catch?" Vamyngu asked and looked around. "There's nobody here."

"I caught chatterboxes like you. I've done so much catching my stomach is about to burst. We'll put off our race till tomorrow," Crane said and shut his eyes again.

Vamyngu blinked hard but could not make head or tail of what Crane had said.

Can you?







WHY OWL HAS A SPOOKY VOICE

Snowy Owl is the most beautiful bird in the tundra, isn't she? Do you want to know why she has such an awful voice? Then listen to this story.

In days long, long gone the northern lights could sing. As soon as night fell and the air became as cold as ice they would begin to sing. It was a beautiful song, but there was no one to hear it, for at night all living creatures were asleep. In those days the birds did not sing at all. Anipa the Owl was a very envious bird. Once she set out to where there were people, saying to herself as she flew along:

"People discovered fire. They made bows and arrows, and knives of stone. They're smart. They can do anything. And they sing fine songs. I'll see what I can learn from them."

Anipa flew to the biggest tent, perched outside and listened. It was nighttime. The village was asleep, but she could hear a voice inside the tent.



A shaman lived in that big tent. He was making magic. He beat his tambourine, hopped about, waved his arms and shouted hoarsely, "Whoo! Whoo! Whoo!"

Anipa became excited, beat her wings, hopped up and down and repeated the sounds the shaman had made: "Whoo! Whoo! Whoo!"

From then on no owl could make any other sound.

All the other birds went off to Wise Apaipaiyek the Spider.

"Help us, Great Old Man," they pleaded. "You've given us bright feathers, but we want to sing beautifully as well."

"That's being greedy," Apaipaiyek chided. "That's not nice at all. You want to have lovely feathers and beautiful songs. That'll leave nothing for the others."

The birds talked this over among themselves and then said, "Let us exchange. We'll give the northern lights the colors of our feathers, and you give us the northern lights' songs. They don't need them as much as we do, because no one listens to them anyway. When they roam the sky at night, all the beasts and all the people are sound asleep. No one will ever change this order of things."

The birds finally had their way. Although ever since then the northern lights have been all the colors of the rainbow, lighting up the sky at night, there is no sound to all this bright beauty. But the plain-looking birds of the tundra sing songs that are cheerful and gay.





BEAR AND WIND

Polar Bear stood on an ice pack, looking off into the distance. He couldn't see very far, but he thought he could make out a seal. He got up on his hind paws, shielded his eyes from the sun with his front paw and peered again. Yes, it was a seal! Bear flopped down on his stomach and crawled towards a lane of open water. When he was quite close Seal noticed him and swam off. Polar Bear followed. Seal swam still farther out.

"Ah," Bear sighed, "if I had a friend we'd close in on Seal and she'd never escape."

But Polar Bear did not have a friend.

He climbed out onto the ice again and stood there wondering how he might catch another seal. All of a sudden—what was that? Snow dust swished by Bear's muzzle. He heard a whispering and pricked up his ears. Actually, he was a bit frightened but didn't want to show it, so he rose up on his hind paws and roared, "Who's that tossing snow in my eyes?"

"It's me, Wind," a faint voice replied.

"How dare you!"

"Don't be angry. Help me."

"Hm. How?"

"Why, blow hard. That'll make me stronger."

"What'll you do for me in return?"

"Seals are dozing on an ice floe. I'll blow it towards you."

"Well, then, let's be friends!"

"Let's. There's real strength in friendship."

Polar Bear took a deep breath and blew hard. Wind stirred, grew strong, spread his wings and flew out to sea.

In no time Wind was driving an ice floe back towards Polar Bear. The floe was dotted with seals. Bear attacked the sleeping seals, polished off two and then grabbed a third, but was no longer hungry.

Indeed, Bear's eyes were bigger than his stomach. He decided to rest a while and stretched out with one paw under his head and the other over his muzzle. Soon he was sound asleep.

All day long and all through the night Wind wandered over the sea. By dawn he was completely exhausted. All of a sudden he remembered his friend Polar Bear, wafted over to where Bear lay and settled softly on the floe.

"Help me, friend," Wind whispered.

Bear stirred and rolled over, but paid no attention to Wind.

"Save me! I'm dying!" Wind whistled.

Bear opened one eye and mumbled, "What kind of a friend are you? I can't sleep when you're making so much noise."

Wind managed to spread his drooping wings and drifted off unhappily, flying so close to the waves he barely kept from drowning.

Then something startling happened. Just as dying Wind touched the water a great big whale appeared directly below and blew out



a huge spurt of air. The very thing Wind needed! He grew lively again and set off in high spirits to roam the seas.

After quite a while Wind became tired again and decided to pay another visit to his friend Polar Bear. He flew back to the ice floe and found Bear still asleep, snoring so hard his bulging stomach heaved.

Wind became angry, swirled down and swept the huge ice floe towards shore. Meanwhile, a hunter was lying in wait there. He spotted Bear asleep on the floe and in no time had him securely bound.

Polar Bear roared for help, but Wind said,

"What kind of a friend are you? Friends always remember their friends, and not only when they're in trouble themselves."

Thus did the friendship between Polar Bear and Wind end.





SLY FOX

One day Sly Fox was walking through the woods. He met Bear carrying his prey.

"Let's see which of us is the cleverest," Fox said.

"I am! Me, Bear!"

"Then see if you can out-fox me. If you do, I'll give you my fur-stitched parka and my fancy sealskin boots."

"All right. If I don't, you can have my prey, since I've nothing else to offer."

No sooner had they struck a bargain than Fox cried, "Oh! Look! Someone's driving up in a reindeer sled!"

Bear spun around, but there was no one in sight.

"Well, it certainly wasn't hard to trick you!" Fox said and laughed. "Now you try to trick me."

Bear thought long and hard, but could think of nothing. Finally, he said, "It's no use. I'll never be able to out-fox a fox."

A bargain was a bargain, so Bear had to hand his prey over to Fox. Sly Fox shouldered Bear's prey, and they both set out for their dens, each one going in a different direction.

REINDEER AND BULLHEAD

One day Reindeer came to the edge of the sea, tasted the salty water, washed his hooves and stood there, resting. That was when Bullhead stuck his head out of the water and said,

"I've been looking at you, Reindeer, and I'm amazed at how ugly you are. Your antlers are crooked, your stomach bulges and your legs are skinny and bent."

Reindeer hooked Bullhead with his antlers and tossed him onto the shore. Bullhead lay gasping on the rocks.

"Throw me back into the sea, friend, before I dry in the wind and die," Bullhead pleaded.

Reindeer felt sorry for him, for Bullhead was a living creature after all. "All right, back you go!" Reindeer said and tossed Bullhead back into the water.

Reindeer stood on the shore, basking in the sun. A few moments later Bullhead stuck his head out of the water and began taunting again.

"Even though you've got four legs, you can't swim like me! And besides, you're hunchbacked and paunchy!"

At this Reindeer hooked Bullhead with his antlers and tossed him onto the rocks again.

Bullhead twitched and jerked. It was no use. Once again he pleaded, "Throw me back into the sea, friend, before I die. I'll never make fun of you again."

Since Bullhead was indeed dying, Reindeer said, "All right, back you go!"

Bullhead lay on the sandy bottom until his strength returned. Then he surfaced and began to jeer once more. "Why, you don't even have a tail! What an ugly thing you are! It makes me sick just to look at you!"

Reindeer became very angry. He tossed Bullhead far up on the shore and then galloped off into the mountains.




EP



MAN AND DOG

Dog once lived in the forest. He was lonely living there all by himself and set off in search of a friend. After a while he came upon Hare.

"Let's share a house, Hare," Dog said.

"Let's," Hare replied.

And so they headed back together. When darkness fell each curled up and went to sleep. In the middle of the night Dog began to bark. Hare woke up and became frightened.

"Why're you barking?" he said. "Wolf'll come running and eat us up."

At this Dog said to himself, "I've found myself the wrong kind of friend. Hare's a coward. I'm sure Wolf isn't afraid of anyone." So he set out in search of Wolf.

After a while he came upon Wolf.

"Let's share a house, Wolf," Dog said.

"Let's," Wolf replied.

When darkness fell each curled up and went to sleep. In the middle of the night Dog began to bark. Bear woke up and became frightened.

"Why're you barking? Bear'll come running and eat us up," Wolf scolded.

At this Dog said to himself, "Wolf isn't very fierce if he's afraid of Bear. That means Bear is the strongest of all." So Dog set out in search of Bear.



After a while he came upon Bear.

"Let's share a house, Bear," Dog said.

"Let's," Bear replied.

When darkness fell each curled up and went to sleep. In the middle of the night Dog began to bark. Wolf woke up and became frightened.

"Why're you barking? Man'll come running and kill us. Men have guns," Bear scolded.

At this Dog said to himself, "This one's a coward, too. Bear's not the kind of friend I need. I'm sure Man isn't afraid of anyone." And so he ran off in search of Man.





After a while he came upon a hunter.

"Let's share a house, Man," Dog said.

"Let's," Man replied and led Dog off to his tent.

When darkness fell Man went to sleep. At midnight Dog began to bark. Man woke up. He was not frightened.

"If you want to eat, Doggie, go ahead, but don't keep me up with your barking," he said.

Dog saw that Man was not afraid of anyone and so decided to stay. He's still there.

VIXEN THE MERCHANT

They say this all happened very long ago. One day in winter when the cold winds swept through the tundra, covering over the tracks of every animal, hungry Vixen said to her sister,

"We and our children will starve to death if we don't think of something soon." And they did.

One of the sisters dressed up like a merchant. The other dressed up like a guide and interpreter. Towards evening they came to a camp of reindeer herders. The people welcomed them and gave them meat and tea. Afterwards Vixen the Merchant said,

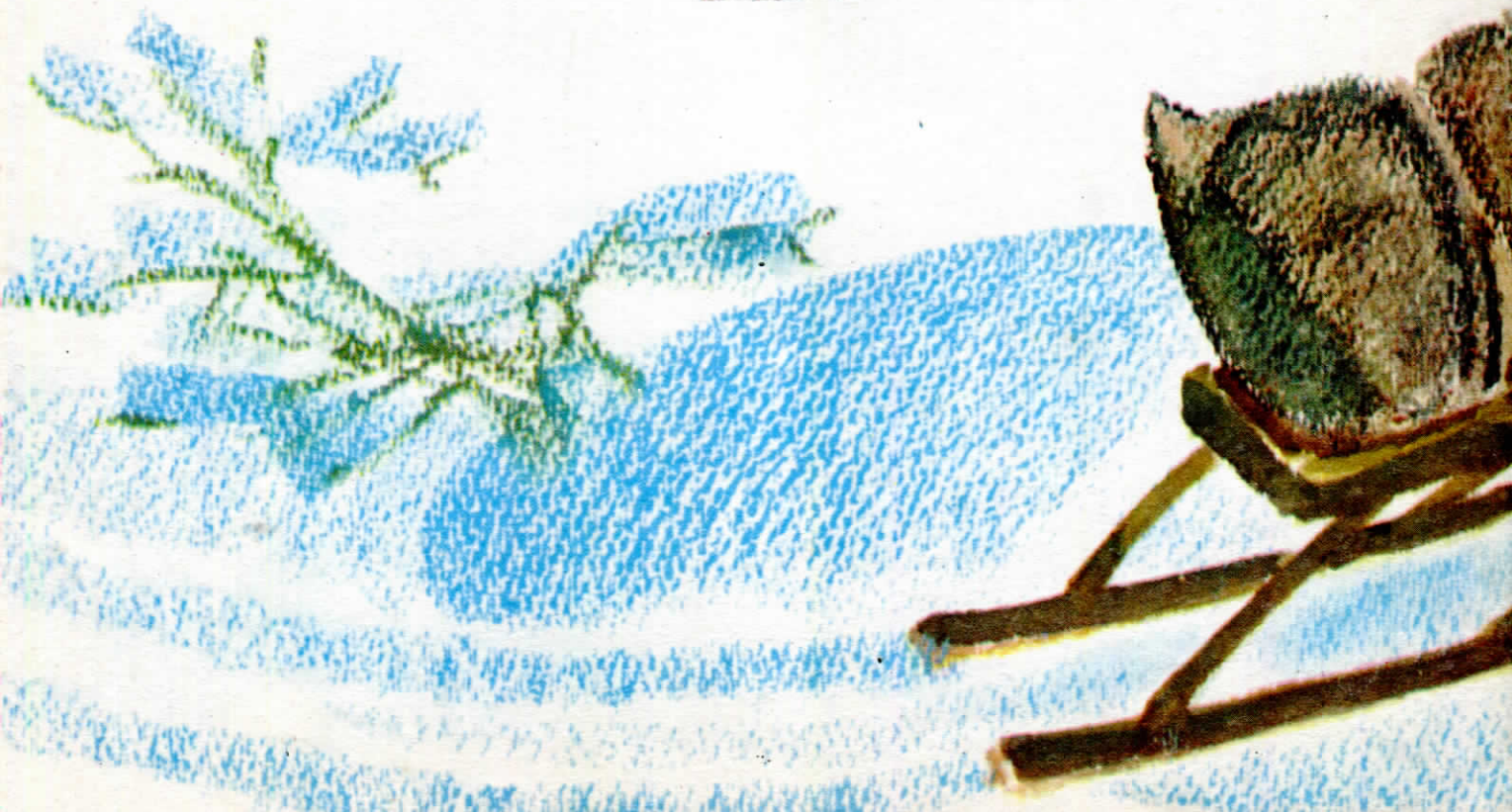
"Pyr-por-pur!"

Her sister translated this as follows:

"The merchant is offering you a sack of sugar in exchange for a reindeer."

"Oh, that's a fine bargain!" the Chukcha herders said and gave the false merchant a large, fat reindeer.

When everyone was asleep the two vixens harnessed the reindeer to their sled and sped off. By the time their hosts started looking for them the next morning they were far, far away. Then the herders untied the sack of sugar and found that it was chock-full of packed snow.




ЕР



TRYING TO THINK

One day Brown Bear met Moose.

"Hello, Moose," Bear said.

"Hello, Bear."

Bear looked at himself, then at Moose, and said, "That's funny. How come we don't look alike?"

"What d' you think the difference is?" Moose wanted to know.

"Why, there are two branching trees growing out of your head, but there aren't any growing out of mine."

Moose looked at himself, then at Bear, and said, "You're right. We don't resemble each other. Everything about us is different, even our legs and hides. How come?"

"Let's go on together," Bear said. "Maybe we'll meet someone who knows the answer."

So Moose and Bear walked on together. After a while they came upon Mountain Goat.


EP

"Can you tell us why we don't look alike?" Bear asked, happy to have found someone who might know. "Oh, but you don't resemble us, either!"

"Don't I?" Mountain Goat was really surprised.

"Of course not. You've got two big logs growing out of your head. Moose has two branching trees growing out of his, but there's nothing growing out of mine."

Mountain Goat became still more puzzled. "I always thought we were alike."

"Let's sit down and try to figure it out," Bear said.

They sat down in a little clearing and began to think. They thought long and hard.

"I can't think any more. Thinking gives me a headache," Moose said.

"Thinking makes me dizzy!" said Mountain Goat.

At this they both rose and trotted off.

"So that's why we don't resemble each other!" Bear cried. "Moose and Mountain Goat are stupid. They can't even think. That's why they've got those things growing out of their heads. Why, they've even run away from trying to think so hard."





MOUSE

Spring came. The sun warmed the earth and broke up the ice on the river. The air was filled with the crashing sound of ice floes colliding as the current carried them off.

Mouse heard the noise, scurried to the top of a little hill and squeaked, "Don't float near the bank, Ice! My nest is right around the bend. See you don't carry it off."

"When I start moving there's no stopping me," the largest floe replied.

Mouse bristled. "Don't think you're so special, Ice! You'll get stuck in the shallows, the sun'll shine on you, and you'll just melt away."

Ice Floe fell silent, but the Sun spoke up.

"Hey, there, Mouse! Don't be so uppity. What's it to you whether I melt Ice or not? Why d' you silence someone older than you?"

Mouse threw back her head and squeaked, "Don't you be so uppity, either, Sun! Cloud'll come by and cover you up. What'll be the good of you then?"

The Sun fell silent, but Cloud spoke up.

"Why're you such a grouch, Mouse? What's it to you if I cover up the Sun once in a while? Why d' you silence someone older than you?"

Mouse squeaked at Cloud, too. "You've nothing to be proud of, either, Cloud. Wind'll blow and chase you anyplace it wants to. It'll tear you to bits."

Cloud fell silent, but Wind spoke up.

"Don't be impudent, Mouse! What's it to you if I chase clouds across the sky? Why d' you silence someone older than you?"



But there was no stopping Mouse. "I don't care what you say, Wind. You've nothing to boast about. Why, you cannot even blow far. You'll crash into the Ural Mountains, and that'll be the end of you."

Wind fell silent, but the rocks of the Ural Mountains began to rumble.

"You're smaller than a speck, Mouse, but you argue with your elders. What's it to you if we block the wind's path?"

At this Mouse turned to the Ural Mountains and said, "I may be small, but what's so special about you being big, Mountains? Anyone can trample all over you. Look! There's Wolverine squatting on your rocks, and you can't chase her off."

The Ural Mountains fell silent, but Wolverine spoke up.

"Don't poke your nose into other people's business, Mouse. Don't make me angry, or I'll swallow you whole."

"You can't scare me, Wolverine. What'll you say when you're caught in a trap?"

Wolverine fell silent.

Mouse waited a while to see what the trap would say, but the trap said nothing. It was made of wood and could not speak.

That's when Mouse decided she'd out-argued them all. She stuck her nose high in the air, twitched her tail and strutted off to her nest.

But her nest was gone. While Mouse had been busy arguing, the ice floe had floated around the bend, bumped into the bank and carried off her nest.

Mouse looked at the place where her nest had been. "I guess I didn't out-argue anyone after all. I was just wasting my time," she said and began building a new nest.



RAVEN AND WOLF

They say there once was a raven who had a slide of his own. As he slid down the slope he would caw, "Oh, what fun! Everything's whizzing by!"

He would zoom to the edge of the cliff, fly up and circle back to the top of the slope.

One day Wolf happened by. "Hey, friend! Let me have a turn on your slide."

"You'd better not. You can't fly. You'll fall into the water," Raven replied.

"No, I won't. I've got long legs. Come on, please let me have a turn."

"All right, but don't say I didn't warn you!"

As Wolf slid down the slope he yelped, "Oh, what fun! Everything's whizzing by!"

At the edge of the cliff Wolf tried to brake with his paws but wasn't quick enough and landed in the water.

"Help! Pull me out!" he cried.

"No, I won't," Raven replied. "I told you you'd fall into the water. You'll have to get out as best you can now."

"If you pull me out, I'll bring you a pack of mice," Wolf promised.

"No."

"Listen, friend, if you pull me out, I'll give you a big pack of gophers," Wolf promised.

"No."

"You know what I'll give you if you pull me out? A bowl of porridge with a spoon stuck in it!" Wolf said.

Raven was overjoyed. "Why didn't you say so? You wouldn't have had to spend so much time in the icy water!" Raven said, pulling Wolf out. He even squeezed the water off Wolf's fur.

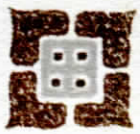
Then Wolf said, "I sure did trick you, didn't I?"

"I'll never trust you again!" Raven fumed.

Wolf was silent. After a while he said, "I'm going to where it's getting dark. Where are you flying to?"

Raven was so upset he wouldn't even look at Wolf. "I'm flying to where it's getting light," he finally muttered.

And so Wolf and Raven went their separate ways.





HOW VIXEN TRICKED SEAL

Squirrel and her family lived in a big tree. One day Vixen came along and said,

"Give me one of your little ones!"

"I will not!" Squirrel replied.

"If you don't, I'll chop down your tree and roast you all on a spit!"

Squirrel became frightened and did as Vixen told her to. Vixen ran off to the woods, but was soon back again.

"Give me one of your little ones!" she said.

"I will not!"

"If you don't, I'll chop down your tree and roast you all on a spit!"

So Squirrel did as Vixen told her to and was grieving in her tree when Heron perched beside it.

"What's the matter?" Heron asked.

"Vixen has been coming here after my little squirrels. She says she'll chop down our tree and roast us all on a spit if I don't give them up."

"Now listen to me, Squirrel. Don't you believe a word of what she says. Next time she comes by you say, 'You've neither an axe nor a spit.' And when she wants to know who said so, you say, 'Heron.'" And Heron flew off towards the sea.

The next time Vixen came by and shouted, "Give me a squirrel or I'll chop down your tree and roast you all on a spit!" Squirrel replied,

"You've neither an axe nor a spit."

"Who said so, you stupid squirrel?"

"Heron."

"Where is she?"

"She flew off towards the sea."

"I'll catch that bird," Vixen said to herself and hurried off in the same direction. When she spotted Heron she began creeping up, but when she was close enough to pounce, Heron took to the air. Vixen sprang, got a grip on Heron's tail feathers, was lifted up and carried out over the water.

They were soon flying over a tiny island. Vixen's jaws were quite numb by now. She opened her mouth, let go of Heron's tail and fell, landing on the island.

"What'll I do? How'll I get back to the mainland?" Vixen wondered. She could think of nothing. "Owww! Owww!" she howled.

Baby Seal stuck his head out of the water. "Why're you crying?" he asked.

"I'm not. I'm singing."

"What're you singing about?"

"I'm singing a song about a very wise vixen, meaning me, of course, who knows how to count and has counted all the animals in the world. All except you seals. But there probably aren't many of you anyway."



"You're wrong. We're a very big people."

"How many of you are there?"

"I don't know, but if we all surface at once we'll fill all the space in the sea between this island and the mainland."

"Well, then, you do that, and I'll count you."

Baby Seal disappeared under the water. Soon the sea began to churn. All the seals in that part of the sea were surfacing. There were so many of them they filled the sea between the island and the mainland.

Vixen set out, stepping from head to head, on her journey back to the mainland. As she trotted along she kept repeating, "One, two, three. One, two, three. One, two, three," going from seal to seal until at last she reached land again. Once on the shore, she placed her front paws on her hips and laughed.

"Well? How many of us are there?" the seals finally wanted to know.

But Vixen was laughing so hard she couldn't stop. "I tricked you!" she shouted. "I ran along your heads till I reached shore. If you want to know, I can only count up to three. But as for being foxy, I've three times three tricks up my sleeve!"

"You've made us seals surface for nothing," Old Mother Seal said. "You're a mean animal, Vixen. Yes, you've lots of tricks up your sleeve, but not enough to keep you from falling into Man's trap."

Old Mother Seal was right. The next time Vixen went hunting she was caught in a trap.



MIGHTY MOUSIE

Mousie was sitting under a burdock leaf when a man walked by. They did not see each other, because one was too big and the other was too small, but Mousie heard the song the man was singing.

"There are songs and stories about people, but there's nothing

about us. How come?" Mousie wondered. "People become famous if they're very strong. There are fine wrestlers, marksmen, runners, hunters and brave men. What can I do to make people sing songs and tell stories about me? I know! I'll chew through this tree and carry it up to the top of a high mountain."

Mousie began gnawing away at the tree. He kept at it until he'd gnawed a circle around the trunk. Then he grasped the tree and began rocking it back and forth.

"Ahhh!"

The tree did not budge. Mousie started gnawing at it again.

"Ahhh!"

The tree creaked and fell. Mousie jumped aside in fright, but then realized he'd only toppled a blade of grass, not a tree. What a disappointment! People would have laughed if anyone had seen him.

"What can I do to become famous?" Mousie wondered as he pattered along in the tundra. At the foot of a mountain he saw a chain of large lakes.

"If I swim across a lake this big, and dry my parka and sealskin boots on the other side people will pass and see me. They'll say, 'What a fine swimmer he is!'"

So Mousie swam across one of the lakes. It was hard going. He went under several times, gulped water and nearly drowned, but finally made it to the other side.

Mousie was very pleased as he stood drying his parka and sealskin boots by a campfire.

Just then a hunter approached, stepped across the lake and never even noticed the brave swimmer. New big lakes appeared in the hunter's wake.

Every time he set his foot down and made a dent in the ground it filled up with water. Now there was a new chain of lakes stretching off in the tundra.

Mousie was close to tears. He sat by the lake for a while, then pulled on his parka and boots and set off again, going farther and farther until he came to a mountain. There he stopped. "It's too high to climb and too far to circle round." Mousie said to himself and finally heaved it onto his back.

On and on Mousie trudged until he reached the sea. There he set the mountain down on the highest cliff of Bering Straits.

"Now I'm a real hero!" he squeaked as he sat down beside his mountain.



Mousie rested there a while and then decided to go to a trappers' camp for tea. As he started down the slope a gust of wind blew the pebble he had brought there down after him.

The people had overheard Mousie and had seen the pebble rolling down the slope. They made up a story about him and named the high cliff Mt. Avsynikh which, in Eskimo, means: "The Mountain Mousie Brought."





HOW GOPHER AND BEAR EXCHANGED HOUSES

One day Brown Bear was standing on a hill. Gopher was drinking water at the river bank. When Gopher saw Bear she called out,

"Hey, Bear, come over here!"

Bear lumbered over.

"There's something important I want to tell you," Gopher said.

"What can you tell me that's so important?"

"Well, I thought it would be a good idea if we exchanged houses."



"All right. Let's. Where's yours?"

"Over there on the hill. Where's yours?"

"Over there on the mountain."

"I'll live in your house now," Gopher said happily. "And you can have mine."

Bear headed off to Gopher's burrow, and Gopher set out for Bear's den.

When Gopher reached the den she inspected it. "What a fine house I've found! What a fine life I'll have here!" she exclaimed in delight.

Bear found Gopher's burrow, but he could only stick his nose inside it. He huffed and puffed, but couldn't get any farther in. So Bear went back to see Gopher.

"What is it?" Gopher asked.

"I couldn't squeeze into your house."

"Don't be silly! I've crawled into yours, haven't I?"

"Well, I couldn't even get my nose in properly."

"Let's compare noses, then," Gopher said and stretched out along Bear's nose. "Hm! Am I really smaller than your nose? I guess we're not going to exchange houses after all, because you can't live in my burrow. Goodbye, then. I'll be going home."

So each one went on living in his own house.





I WANT TO—DON'T WANT TO GO

It so happened that the bears decided to leave the berry patches and move on to where the mushrooms grew. No sooner said than done. The big bears led the way, with the cubs following.

They journeyed on and on. When they reached a stream they crossed it. When they reached a river they swam across. When they reached a mountain they climbed it.

Little Cub was the last in line. He trudged along unhappily, for he was very tired. After a while he began to whine, but his mother didn't hear him. He whimpered louder, but still his mother didn't stop. She kept on going, looking off into the distance. Little Cub tried to catch up but wasn't strong enough. Besides, his paws were



sore. As ill-luck would have it, he spotted some ripe blueberries and stopped to munch on them, eating the tasty berries until he had room for no more. When Little Cub looked up at last he couldn't see a single bear. They must have all gone beyond the mountain.

Little Cub became frightened. He was all alone in the tundra now. He sat back on his haunches and howled. Someone replied, but the sound was terrifying: "Croak! Croak!"

Little Cub scampered off. He tripped over a rock in his haste and hurt his paw. He got scratched in a bramble thicket. He tumbled down a slope and into a river, was drenched and just managed to crawl back onto the bank.

By then it was getting dark.

Little Cub fell asleep among the hummocks. When he awoke the next morning he saw someone sitting by his side. That someone had long ears, a short tail and a wiggly nose. Little Cub thought the creature looked very funny.

"Who're you?"

"I'm Hare. How'd you get here?"

"All the big bears went off and left me."

Hare felt sorry for Little Cub and took him along to his tent. The two became great friends, spending their days together. While Hare nibbled on twigs, Little Cub would eat berries. Hare would beat the dust out of Little Cub's fur with his hard paw, and Little Cub would comb Hare's fur with his claw. It was a wonderful life.

One day Hare scampered off to the river for a drink of water. A big bear was catching fish in the shallows there.

Just as Hare was about to dash off he said to himself, "That bear can't harm me. I'll always manage to run away." So he shouted, "Hey, Shaggy! All the bears have moved on. What're you doing here?"

"I'm looking for my cub. When we came to where the mushrooms grow I saw that my son was missing. All the other cubs were there except mine. My cub must've gotten lost somewhere in the mountains."

"I'll tell you what, my friend. You follow me. If you recognize a certain cub he's yours, but if you don't, he'll stay on with me."

As they neared Hare's tent Little Cub spotted his mother and raced towards them. Mother Bear was happier still to have found him and licked Little Cub from head to toe.

"I'm so glad I've found you at last! Come along with me now," she said.

Little Cub trotted along. After they had gone a ways he turned to look back and saw Hare crying bitterly by his tent.

"Let's stay here! I don't want to go anyplace!" Little Cub whimpered.

"Come along, son!" Mother Bear coaxed. "There are so many mushrooms there. Wait till you see how nice it is." She led Little Cub off into the woods, but he kept crying all the way. Nothing she could do would please him. He wouldn't eat the food she gave him. He wouldn't even play. He just kept on crying.

"This is a bad place! It's dark here in the woods, but it's light in the tundra. These mushrooms are bitter, but the berries there are



sweet. I want to go back! Let's go back to the tundra," Little Cub wailed.

Mother Bear didn't know what to do. "All right," she said at last. "We'll spend the night here and start back for the tundra tomorrow."

Then they went to sleep. Little Cub turned and tossed all night, sobbing in his sleep.

At the crack of dawn he heard something go thump-thump as heels beat against the ground, and then hoppity-hop right outside Mother Bear's tent. Little Cub tumbled out to see who it was. It was his long-eared friend, Hare! They began to play hide-and-seek and tag among the trees. Soon Mother Bear woke up and began preparing for the journey.

"Where are you going, Mama?" Little Cub asked.

"Why, back to the tundra. You want to go back, don't you? You said you don't like it here."

"But I do like it. These are fine woods. They're full of mushrooms. I don't want to go anyplace!"

And so they remained in the forest, Mother Bear, Little Cub and his best friend, Hare.





MOUSE THE BRAGGART

Vuvyltu the Mouse was small, but liked to boast. She saw Drake and said, "Look at me: I can walk and scamper, and dig a burrow, and put away food for the winter, but all you can do is swim and fly."

"That's right," said Gopher who happened to be nearby, "except that you walk slowly, can't run very far, dig shallow burrows and just barely have enough food put away to last you the winter. So even though you can do four things, you can't do a single one properly."

Mouse the braggart said nothing. What could she say?



FOX CUB AND BULLHEAD

One day, as Fox Cub was hurrying along the lake shore, Bullhead swam up to the water's edge. At the sight of him Fox Cub began to tease in a sing-song voice:

Bull-bull-bullhead,
You've a big stomach!
Bull-bull-bullhead,
You've a big mouth!

Bullhead got very angry and said:

Your eyes are round,
Your fur's all tangled,
So there!

Fox Cub burst into tears and ran off home.

"Why're you crying?" Mother Fox asked.

"Because Bullhead teased me. He said my eyes are round and my fur's all tangled."

"You must've teased him first," Mother Fox said.

Fox Cub had nothing to say to this, and so said nothing.



MOUSE AND VIXEN

Little Mouse lived in the tundra. One day she sat by the fire, boiling water for tea as she waited for her friend Vixen to come visiting.

"Ah, it's you!" Mouse said when she saw her coming.

"Yes, it's me. Let's play while the kettle boils," Vixen said.

"No, wait a while. Let's have our tea first."

Vixen pouted and was all set to leave, so Mouse quickly said, "What'll we play?"

"Let's jump."

They started jumping, and since Vixen could jump higher, Mouse was the loser.

"Now let's play hide-and-seek," Mouse said. "The one who finds the other one will be the winner."

They argued about who would be it. Vixen finally won the argument and ran off to hide, but left her bushy tail out in full sight.

Mouse tugged at her tail, pulled her out of her hiding place and then scampered off to hide. Vixen searched high and low, but could not find her.

"Say something so I'll hear you!" Vixen finally shouted.

"Here I am!" Mouse called out.

Vixen dashed to where the sound had come from, but by then Mouse had scurried away. And so it went. Mouse would call out: "Here I am!" and then scamper off to a new hiding place, with Vixen leaping about until she collapsed in a heap by the campfire. "Come on out! You win!" Vixen shouted. "Let's have our tea!" But by then all the water had boiled out of the kettle.







BEAR AND CHIPMUNK

Bear padded his den with dry leaves and moss, curled up in a dark corner and fell so soundly asleep that he didn't know it had begun to snow, didn't hear the blizzards raging over the forest or the old firs and cedars creaking in the frost.

When the spring sun rose over the taiga, melting the snow and bringing forth the first gurgling streams, Bear awoke.

He crept out of his den and sat down on a log, rubbing his eyes, stretching and grumbling. "Yes, spring is here, but there's nothing to eat. What am I going to do?" he said.

Indeed, Bear was very hungry, for he had not had a bite to eat all winter. No wonder he was famished. He tramped off in search of food, but since there was still a lot of snow on the ground he could not hope for much. There was not a single green blade of grass in sight, to say nothing of the berries and nuts which he loved so and which would not appear for quite some time.



Bear lumbered through the forest until he came to an old stump. Something was moving under it. Bear got hold of the stump and tried to pull it up. The stump was big and its roots were deep, while Bear was still very weak.

"Is there anybody here? Come on out!" he roared.

A little brown animal darted out from under the stump. It was Chipmunk. He'd been hibernating all winter, too, snug in his burrow among the roots. Now Chipmunk looked up to see Bear roaring fiercely.

"Why're you so angry, Grandfather Bear?"

"Because I'm hungry. I haven't had a bite to eat all winter. D'you have anything to eat?"

"Be right back," Chipmunk said, scooted down into his larder which he'd filled with tasty tidbits the previous autumn and brought out some small, sweet roots. "Here you are."

Bear ate them and felt better. "Thanks, Chipmunk. Though you're not very big, you're big-hearted." At this Bear patted Chipmunk gently, but still, his claws made dark stripes down Chipmunk's brown back.

The stripes did not go away. Ever since then chipmunks have had black stripes down their backs. When the other animals ask them why their fur is striped they say, "That's because Grandfather Bear patted us."





HOW MOUSE FROZE FAST

One day Mouse went out to the middle of the lake to get a drink of water. She made a little hole in the ice, had a drink and then sat down by the hole to rest. But while Mouse was resting, her tail froze to the ice. Mouse began to cry. Then she sang a little song:

I'm stuck to the ice on the lake!
O woe is me!
Maybe Ermine will come by,
Maybe he'll rescue me.

No sooner had she stopped singing than Ermine showed up.

"Go away! You smell bad!" Mouse said, and so Ermine scampered off.


E.P.

Then Mouse sang her song again:

I'm stuck to the ice on the lake!
O woe is me!
Maybe Gopher will come by,
Maybe she'll rescue me.

Suddenly Gopher showed up.
"Go away! Your tail's too long!" Mouse said, and Gopher ran off.
Mouse began to sing again:

I'm stuck to the ice on the lake!
O woe is me!
Maybe Hare will come by,
Maybe he'll rescue me.

Suddenly Hare showed up.
"Go away! Your tail's too short!" Mouse said, and Hare ran away.
Mouse began to sing once again:

I'm stuck to the ice on the lake!
O woe is me!
Maybe Bear will come by,
Maybe he'll rescue me.

No sooner had she stopped singing than Bear showed up. He came up to Mouse, took a swipe at her and knocked her free, but her tail remained stuck to the ice.

Now Mouse had no tail.

She'd certainly found the wrong kind of helper!





FOXY VIXEN

One day, as Vixen was sitting on the shore wondering how to get some fresh fish for dinner, a log with two seagulls perched on it floated by.

"What're you doing there?" Vixen shouted.

"We're fishing."

"Can I join you?"

"All right. Jump!"

Vixen leaped. The log turned, making the seagulls fly away. Vixen landed in the water. The current carried her downstream into the sea. Now there was water everywhere.

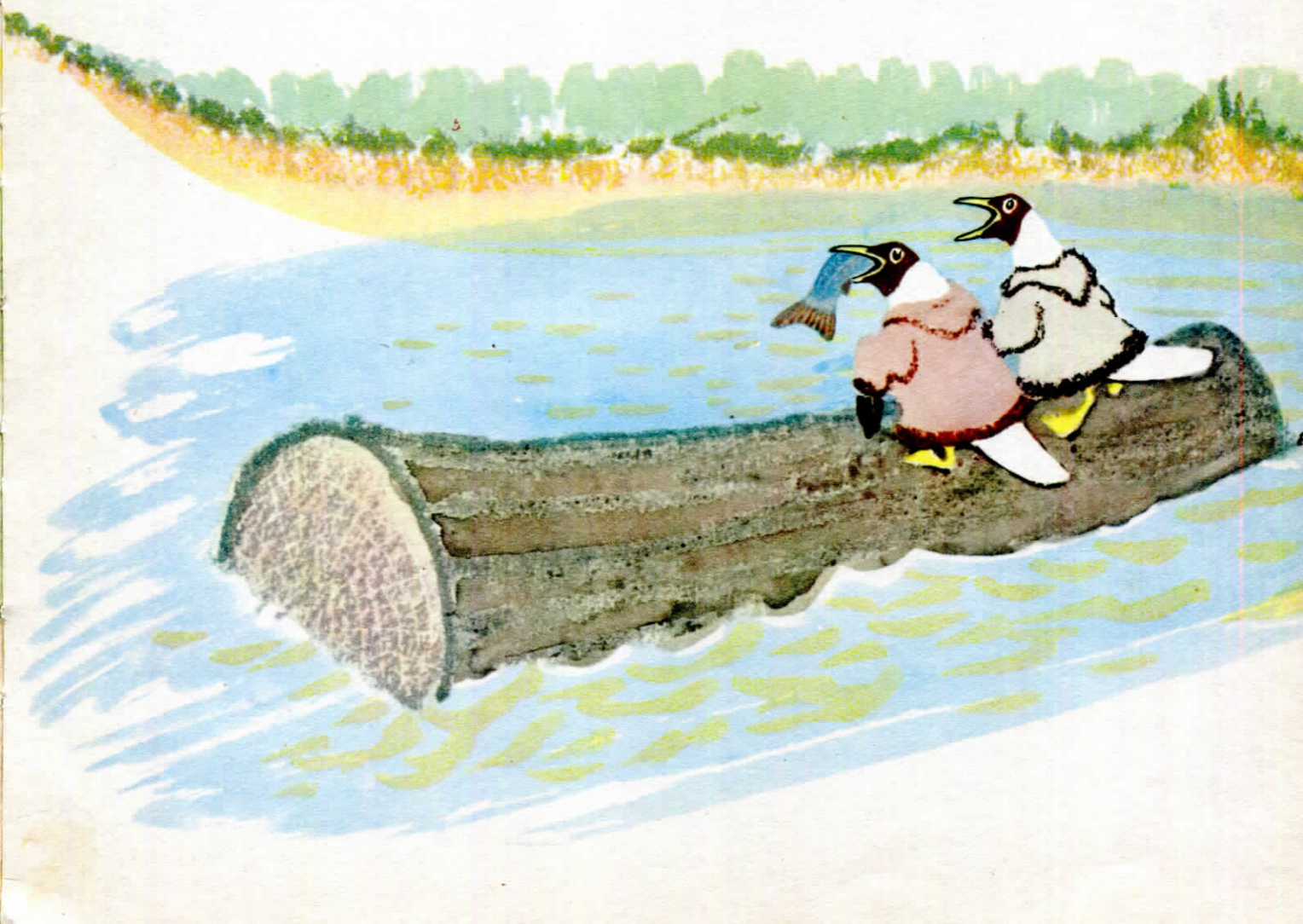
"You, paws! Be my oars! You, tail! Be my rudder!" Vixen said.

Soon she was sailing along as if she were in a boat: rowing with her paws and steering with her tail. But she'd forgotten to tell her tail to steer towards shore. It was steering out to sea.

Vixen paddled along, going farther and farther away from the shore, until she finally reached the middle of the sea. She had no idea which way to go from there. That was when she spotted Seal.

"How come you're so far out, Vixen? Are you lost in our sea? You'll never reach shore from here," Seal said.

"I know exactly where I'm going, Seal. I want to see whether there are any animals left in the sea. I've heard there are hardly any of you left."





"You're wrong," Seal said. "There are still many animals in the sea. There are seals like me, and walruses and whales."

"You don't say? But seeing is believing, you know. You animals all come to the surface and form a line back to the shore. Then I'll count you."

Soon all the seals and whales, and walruses surfaced and formed a line right up to the shore.

Vixen ran along their backs as if she were crossing a bridge. As she ran she counted aloud, "One seal, two seals, three seals. One walrus, two walruses, three walruses. One whale, two whales, three whales."

She kept on counting until she reached shore. Once there, she



shouted, "You were right, Seal! There are still a lot of silly animals in the sea. Enough to make a bridge of you across the water. You can all swim off now. I'm going to rest a while."

The animals of the sea swam away. Vixen took off her fur coat and hung it on a bush to dry. Then she spread her tail out on a rock so that it could dry, too.





BRAVE VUVYLTU

One day in summer the mice gathered in a little clearing to relax and gossip after a heavy meal. Each had a bit of news to tell its neighbors. Tailless Vuvyltu boasted that she had eaten a fox.

"I crept up to it. It was lying there on its side with its legs stretched out," she said.

"What'd you do?"

"Chomp-chomp! I chewed off one front leg."

"Then what?"

"Chomp-chomp! I chewed off the other front leg."

"Then what?"

"Chomp-chomp! I chewed off one hind leg."

"Then what?"

"Chomp-chomp! I bit off the other hind leg."

"You certainly are brave! Even Wolf starts eating his prey at the head. Weren't you scared to start eating a fox in pieces like that?"

"But it had no head."



PANCAKES

Mouse, Raven and Snow Ptarmigan lived in the tundra. One day they decided to have pancakes for dinner.

"Who'll go to the store for flour?" Mouse said.

"Not me," said Raven.

"Nor me," said Ptarmigan.

"Then I'll go," said Mouse and went off for flour.

When she came back she said, "Who'll make the dough?"

"Not me," said Raven.

"Nor me," said Ptarmigan.

"Then I will," said Mouse and went for water. She poured the water into a bowl and added the flour and a pinch of salt. Then she kneaded the dough, put it on a board and rolled it out.

"Who'll fry the pancakes?" Mouse said.

"Not me," said Raven.

"Nor me," said Ptarmigan.

"Then I will," said Mouse and fried the pancakes. When they were ready she set them on the table and said, "Who'll eat the pancakes?"

"I will," said Raven.

"So will I," said Ptarmigan.

"Oh no," said Mouse. "You sat and watched while I did all the work. Now you can watch me eat."

So Mouse sat down and ate all the pancakes, which brings the story to an end.







WHY HARE HAS LONG EARS

When the birds and the beasts first appeared in the forest Moose, a large animal, was their chief. One day Moose and his wife were talking in a clearing. Hare was hopping by just then. He heard them speaking and stopped.

"I want to hear what they're saying," Hare said to himself, crept up close, hid behind a stump and began eavesdropping.

"I've all these horns and antlers," Moose was saying, "and I've got to hand them out, but there aren't enough to go around. So I've got to decide which animals will get them."

"I'd like a pair," Hare said to himself. "And why shouldn't I have some? I'm as good as anybody else."

"Whom should I give these antlers to?" Moose asked his wife.

Just as Hare was about to speak up, she replied,

"Give them to Deer. They'll protect him."

"All right. And what about these big horns?"

Before Moose's wife had a chance to say anything, Hare popped out from behind the stump and shouted,

"Give them to me, Moose!"

"Why, my little friend, you don't want these big horns. What'll you do with them?" Moose said.

"I certainly do need them! I'll scare all the other animals. Everybody'll be afraid of me."

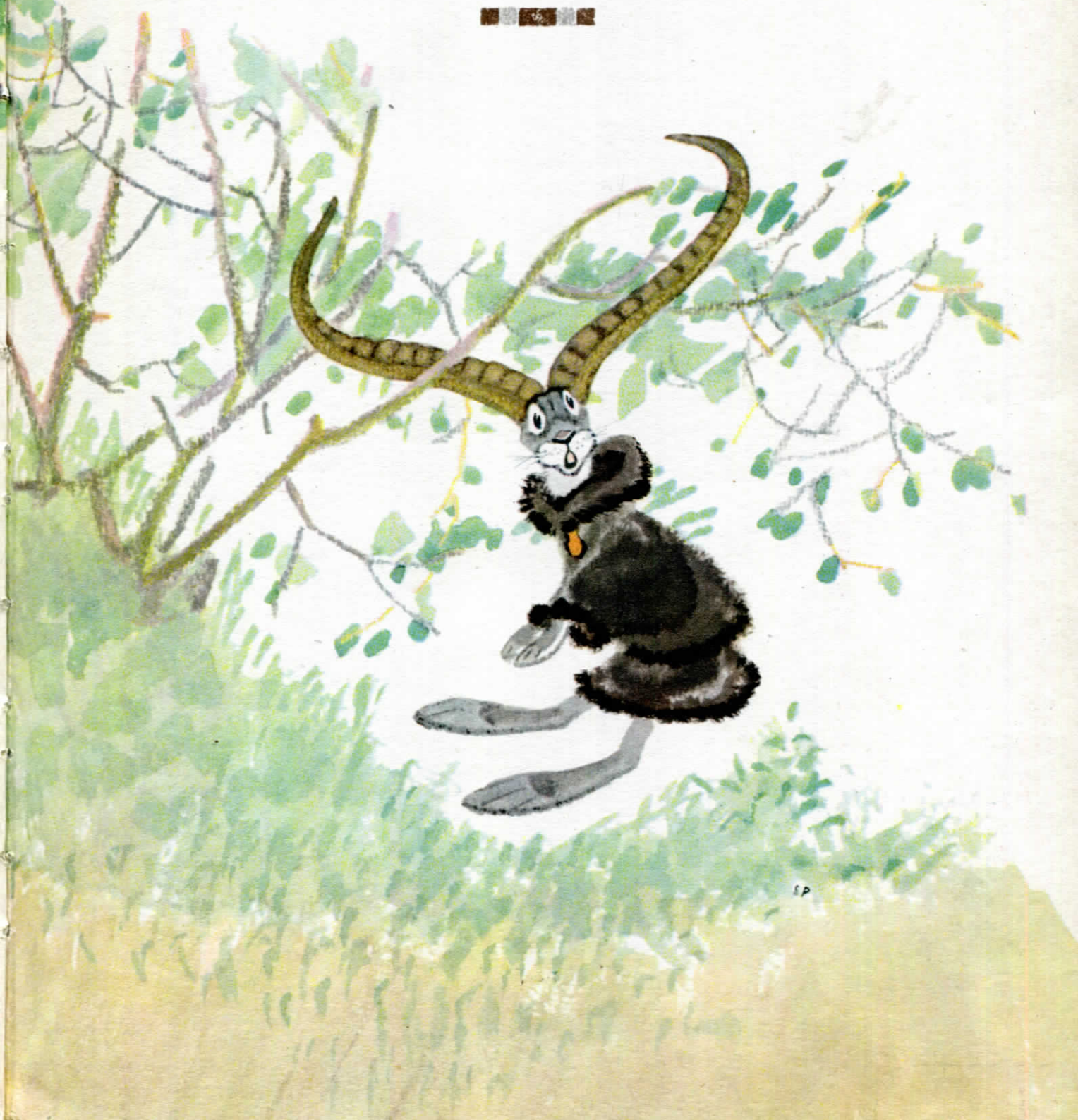
"All right. Here you are," Moose said and placed the horns on Hare's head.

Hare hopped and skipped with joy. All of a sudden a large cedar cone hit him on the head. He leaped into the air and wanted to streak off, but couldn't. His long horns had gotten tangled in the underbrush. Hare couldn't work himself free and squealed in a terrified voice.

Moose and his wife burst out laughing.

"Well, my little friend, I see you're quite a coward. Even the biggest horns won't help a coward. I'll give you a pair of long ears instead, so that everyone'll know you like to eavesdrop."

That was when Hare lost his horns and grew a pair of very long ears instead.



BEAR AND VIXEN

One day Bear was roaming through the forest. He felt thirsty and headed for a little lake. As he was drinking he saw a carp and decided to catch it. He tried again and again, getting all drenched in the process, but could not catch it.

Just then Vixen came out to the lake. "What are you doing here, Bear? Swimming?"

"No. I was trying to catch a carp. If you help me, I'll share it with you."

"All right," Vixen said. "You drink all the water in the lake, and I'll grab the fish. Then we'll share it."

"Why, that's a fine idea! How'd you ever think of it?" Bear said and began drinking. He kept on drinking and drinking, draining the little lake, while his stomach kept getting bigger and bigger.

Soon there was hardly any water left in the lake. They could see the carp now.

Wily Vixen didn't waste a minute. She pounced, snatched the fish and fled. Bear was hopping mad, but couldn't run after the trickster, for his stomach was too full of water.





WHAT A FRIEND!

Two fox cubs lived in the tundra: Red Fox and Polar Fox. Everyone said they were friends, because they ran around together, played together and went exploring in the tundra together. One day they came upon a big boulder. Red Fox took a running jump and landed on top of it.

"Come on up!" he shouted to his friend. "I can see far off from here."

Polar Fox jumped again and again, but couldn't reach the top. "I can't!" he shouted up to Red Fox. "Help me."

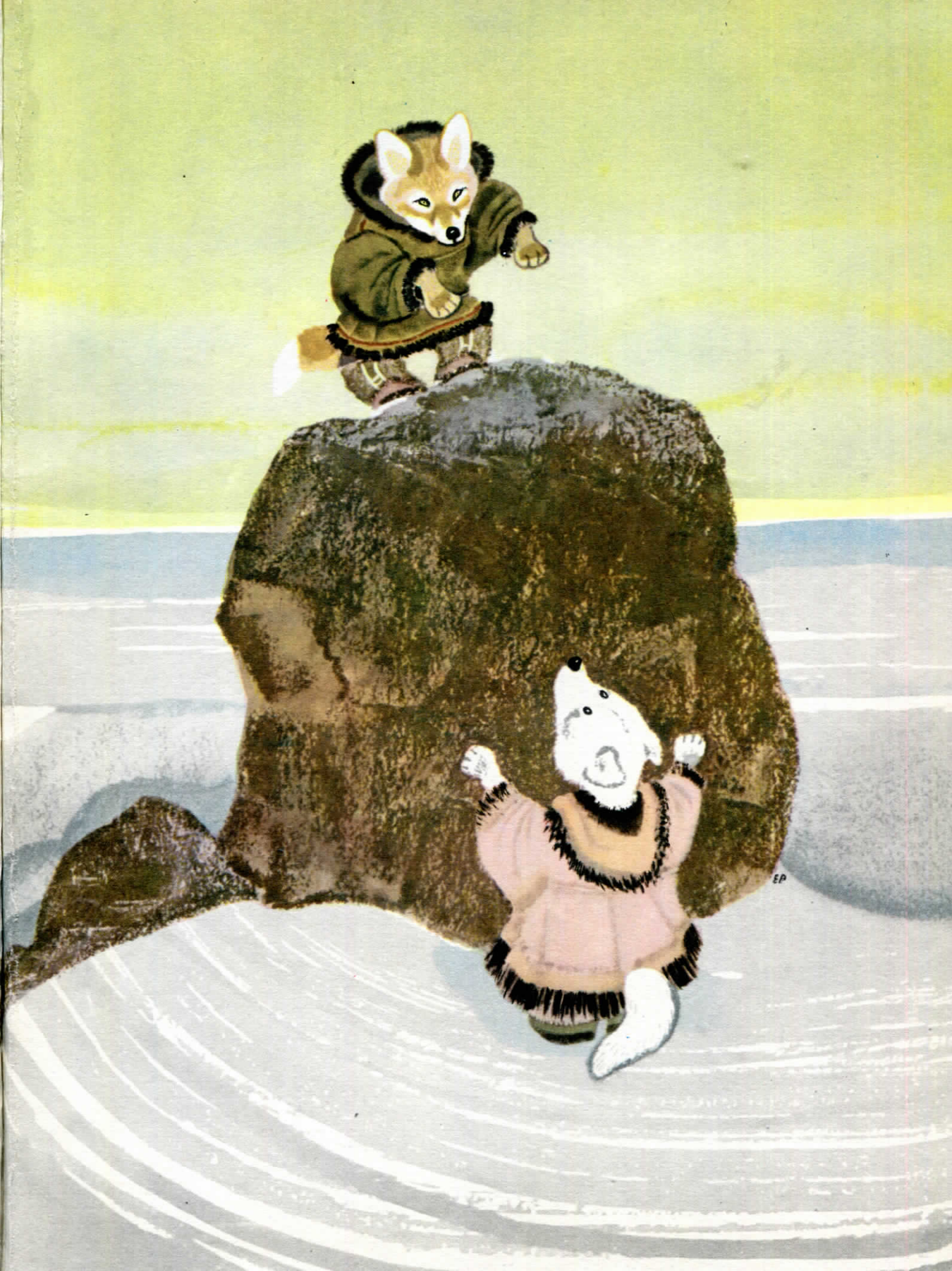
"I know!" Red Fox shouted. "Grab hold of my tail and I'll pull you up. Be sure you hold on tight, or you'll fall and get hurt."

"But how'll I get down?" little Polar Fox wailed. "You'll pull me up, but how'll I get down again?"

"Don't worry, I'll help you. I'll just push you off!"

What a friend!





WILY TEACHES CRAFTY A LESSON

Vixen was very angry at Round-Ears, the polar fox, for having tricked her so many times. She decided to teach him a lesson and have a good laugh at his expense.

One day she hid behind a rock on a cliff above the sea. As soon as she spotted Round-Ears in the distance she shouted,

"Help! Hurry!"

Round-Ears hurried to where Vixen was and said, "What's the matter?"

"I'm calling for help. If we don't hold up the cliff it'll fall and we'll both be killed!"

Round-Ears was really scared. "What'll we do?"

"Hold up the cliff! Get your back up against it and hold it up, while I go off for stones to reinforce it!" Vixen said.

Round-Ears braced himself against the cliff. Vixen, meanwhile, trotted off, but stopped to look back. There he was, straining hard, holding up the cliff. She laughed and ran off home.

Round-Ears stood there on trembling legs for a long time, because he was afraid to be standing there under the cliff, but more frightened still to let go. He even rubbed a bald spot on his shoulder from straining so against the rock.

If you ever see a polar fox with a bald spot on its shoulder you'll know it's Round-Ears, the one that held up the cliff to save Vixen.







BRAVE BEAR

Bird and Mouse were neighbors. One day they were gathering grain. After a while Bird said,

"This should last us the winter. Now let's divide it up."

They began dividing it: one grain for Bird, one for Mouse, one for Mouse, one for Bird, until at last a single grain remained.

Who was to have it?

"It's mine," said Bird. "I worked harder than you. I hunted for each grain as I flew about. I had to fly so much my wings ache."

"It's mine," said Bird. "I worked harder than you. I hunted for each grain as I flew about. I had to fly so much my wings ache."

They argued and argued, and finally began to fight. Their squeaking and squawking could be heard all through the forest. They pummeled each other and screeched, but neither could get the upper hand. Finally, they ran off for help.



Bird asked Thunderbird to come and help her. Mouse brought along a big strong helper, Bear.

Bear swung and hit Thunderbird's wing.

The wing broke, and thunder crashed.

Mouse became very frightened. She darted under a piece of bark.

Bear was still more frightened. "Where's Mouse?" he shouted. He was so frightened he ran off, stepping on some bark as he hurried away. Something rattled under the bark.

"They're shooting!" brave Bear said to himself and streaked off.

But it was only Mouse's teeth chattering.



BAT

Bat perched in a tree, gazed at her children and said, "You're luckier than anyone else! You're better off than anyone else! You can fly like birds and run about like beasts."

Just then a flock of geese winged by. The lead goose saw Bat and cried out,

"It's war! All the birds have sent their children off to war. What're you waiting for, Bat?"

"You can't be serious," Bat replied. "That's what the birds did. But I'm no bird," she said and scurried off into the forest.

The geese looked after her.

"Indeed," they said. "Bat's a beast that runs on all fours and can't fly."

Bat chuckled as she hurried along. "What stupid geese they are! They can go to war if they want to, but we're going for a walk, children," she said.

They strolled about in the taiga and soon came upon some running boars. The lead boar saw Bat, stopped and said,

"It's war! All the beasts have sent their children off to war, but here you are, strolling along with yours!"

"Why, Boar, I'm no beast," Bat said and flew off.

The boars were astonished. "Indeed. Bat's a bird that flies and can't run."

The war ended. The birds and the beasts destroyed the enemy. As the beasts marched home they sang a happy song. Bat and her children fell in with them and began to sing, too.

"Begone!" the beasts shouted and chased Bat and her children away.

Never have bats run on all fours since then.

The birds were flying back from the war, singing a happy song. Once again Bat and her children fell in with them.



"Begone!" the birds cried out and chased Bat and her children away.

Bat became very frightened. She flew away and hid.

Ever since then bats have only come out at night, and even then they are very cautious, for they're afraid of the birds and the beasts.



WHAT'LL I BE?

One day Kainehak the Cub stopped obeying his mother. "I don't want to be a bear! I want to be somebody else," he said and ran away.

Kainehak wandered on and on until he came to the tundra. It was beautiful there. The sun was shining, and there were flowers everywhere. Gopher was sitting outside her burrow. Her front paws were curled under in front as she leaned back on her tail and whistled a song.

"I want to sit up straight like that, too, and whistle like Gopher," Kainehak said.

He climbed a little mound, sat back on his tail and held out his front paws just like Gopher had done. Then he tried to whistle. The sound was quite a roar. It frightened Gopher, who darted into her burrow.



Kainehak was awfully disappointed. He set off again and soon came upon a herd of reindeer. He went up to one of them and said,

."Who're you? I've never seen an animal with antlers before."

"I'm Reindeer."

"I'll be a reindeer, too."

"All right. Let's race!"

As Kainehak toddled off on his stumpy paws Reindeer galloped away and was gone.

"Being a reindeer's no fun," Kainehak muttered and trudged on. He saw a duck near a lake. "I'm going to be a duck. It just waddles along. Besides, it can fly."

He got up on his hind paws, flapped his front paws, jumped as high as he could and plopped right back down again.

"Want me to teach you to fly?" Duck said. "Let's go to the cliff by the shore. It's easier to practice there."

Duck perched on the edge of the cliff, spread her wings and flew away over the water.

Kainehak followed her example but landed in the water with a great splash and went under. When he popped up again he coughed and thrashed his way back to the shore. He stood there, shaking water off his fur. The water in the lake was ice cold. It was no fun bathing when it made your teeth chatter.

As Kainehak trudged off he saw his mother and brother. They were chatting as they headed slowly for the berry patch.

"I guess I'd rather be a good bear than a no-good something else," Kainehak said to himself.





VIXEN, BIRDIE AND RAVEN

Birdie perched beside her nest and four fledgelings. Vixen was just passing by. She saw Birdie and said,

"Give me one of your fledgelings."

"No! Look someplace else."

"If you don't, I'll chop down your tree. See my sword in its fur sheath?" Vixen raised her tail and swished it back and forth as if she were chopping down the tree.

"Don't chop down my tree!" Birdie cried. "I'll do as you say." And she did. Vixen was pleased and ran off to the woods.

Birdie sat mourning in the tree when Raven winged by.

"What's the matter, Birdie?" Raven asked.

"Vixen carried off my fledgeling."

"How could she have done that? Your nest is so high up."

"I had to give him to her, because she wanted to chop down my tree. She's got a sharp sword in a fur sheath."

"You silly bird," Raven said. "That's no sword. It's a tail. Next time Vixen comes by don't give her a fledgeling. Let her chop down the tree. You'll see she won't be able to."

The next day Vixen came by again and said, "Give me one of your fledgelings."

"No, I won't," Birdie replied.

This made Vixen very angry. "Then I'll chop down your tree!" She began slapping her tail against the trunk. It swished and slapped till the fur flew, but the tree did not even sway. Vixen sat down to rest and said, "Who told you you could disobey me? Was it Raven, by any chance?"



"No. I guessed it myself. I have a mind of my own, you know."

"You're not smart enough to have figured that out. Raven must've helped you. I'll teach him to meddle in my affairs!"

Vixen ran off to look for Raven. She searched for many days until at last she came to a big river. There were several tents on the bank. "Raven must be someplace here," she decided, dug a hole, lay down in it and let her tongue loll out. Her tongue was red and could be seen from afar. It was a fine lure for any bird.

As Vixen lay there she saw Raven flying overhead. Raven had spotted Vixen's red tongue and was wondering what on earth it could be. He swooped down. When he was close enough, Vixen grabbed hold of him.

"You taught Birdie some sense, but now I'll teach you a lesson!" Vixen said.

"Whatever you do, don't set me on the cliff! Don't push me off it! Spare me!" Raven pleaded.

"Aha!" Vixen said to herself. "Then that's exactly what I'll do."

She set Raven on the very edge of the cliff and backed away to get a running start and shove him off, but Raven spread his wings and flew away. Vixen was running now and couldn't stop. She tumbled head-over-heels down the slope and nearly broke her legs. Ever since then she's stopped trying to out-fox Raven.



KUTKHA THE RAVEN

One day Kutkha the Raven decided to go fishing. He got out his sled and headed towards the sea. When he reached the shore he sat down to fish.

It was Kutkha's lucky day. He had a fine catch. He tossed the small fry back into the water and kept the big ones. When he was ready to go home he picked out four of the largest salmon, harnessed them to his sled and was off.

"If you pull hard," Kutkha said to the salmon, "I'll feed you well. I'll feed you at every stop on the way."

The salmon pulled as hard as they could. When they came to a birch copse they stopped and said, "Feed us now, Kutkha."



"Let's go a little farther. I'll feed you then," Kutkha replied.

The salmon pulled as hard as they could. When they came to a birch copse they stopped and said, "Feed us now, Kutkha."

When they reached a gully the salmon said, "We're tired, Kutkha. We're hungry. Feed us now."

"Let's go just a little farther. I'll feed you then," Kutkha promised.

The salmon became angry and headed pell-mell for the sea.

"Wait! Stop! I'll feed you now!" Kutkha shouted.

But the salmon didn't trust him any more. They paid no attention to Kutkha the Raven and sped on, ever faster. Kutkha knew he was heading for trouble. He tried to jump off the sled, but his leg got stuck. Just then they reached the sea. The salmon pulled the sled right into the water. Raven Kutkha nearly drowned. He had a hard time getting back to shore.

POOR FROG

There was once a small house on the bank of a big river. An old woman lived in the house. She had a granddaughter, a shaggy dog and a green frog.

The little girl was happy in her grandmother's house. The old woman loved her and cared for her. She dressed her in pretty clothes and cooked her tasty food.

Shaggy Dog was not as lucky, for the old woman did not care for him as much and made him work hard for his food, which was only scraps.

Green Frog was the worst off, for the old woman did not care for her at all. Frog worked hard day and night, carrying water and chopping wood, and she always went to bed feeling hungry.

One day the old woman scolded Green Frog all through the day and then didn't give her a bite to eat. That evening she sent Frog to the river to draw water from a hole in the ice. Frog felt very weak, but she dared not disobey the old woman. She asked Shaggy Dog to go along with her.

They came out to the river, sat down by the hole in the ice and began to cry. They looked up at the Moon and wept.

"Oh, have pity on us, Moon! Croak, croak!" Green Frog wailed. "Come down from the sky! Croak, croak! Take Shaggy Dog and me up to live with you. Croak, croak!"

They wept and wailed, and finally Moon heard them. He felt sorry for them and came down from the sky, right onto ice on the river. Moon picked up Shaggy Dog and Green Frog and flew back to the sky with them.

Meanwhile, the old woman was waiting for Green Frog to bring back some water. At last she went down to the river, but neither Frog nor Shaggy Dog were there. The old woman shouted and called to Shaggy Dog and scolded Green Frog. No one answered her call. Then she glanced up at the sky and saw her dog and her frog on the Moon. They were sitting side by side, playing.

"Dear Froggie! Dear Doggie!" the old woman cried. "I fed you. I cared for you. I cherished you as my own kin, and now you've gone and left me."


E.P.

But no matter how she wailed, her helpers did not return. She still lives in her house with her granddaughter, but Shaggy Dog and Green Frog have been living on the Moon ever since.

If you look up at the Moon you'll see them.



YOU'RE LUCKIER THAN WE ARE

Old Gopher Sikik lived in the tundra. Sikik was envious, mean and more stuck-up than any other three gophers. One day she decided to amaze her neighbors. She'd show them how rich and smart she was. Sikik told the gophers and mice they were all invited to a song festival. She prepared some food and waited for her guests.

Although the neighbors did not especially like her, they came all the same. Sikik treated them to the food, enjoyed some herself and then said,



"I'm going to sing now, and I want you to join in. If you try hard, it should sound very nice." At this she began to sing as loudly as she could.

The guests winced and whispered among themselves:

"How awful!"

"Sikik can't carry a tune!"

"If that's the best you can do, it's best not to sing at all!"

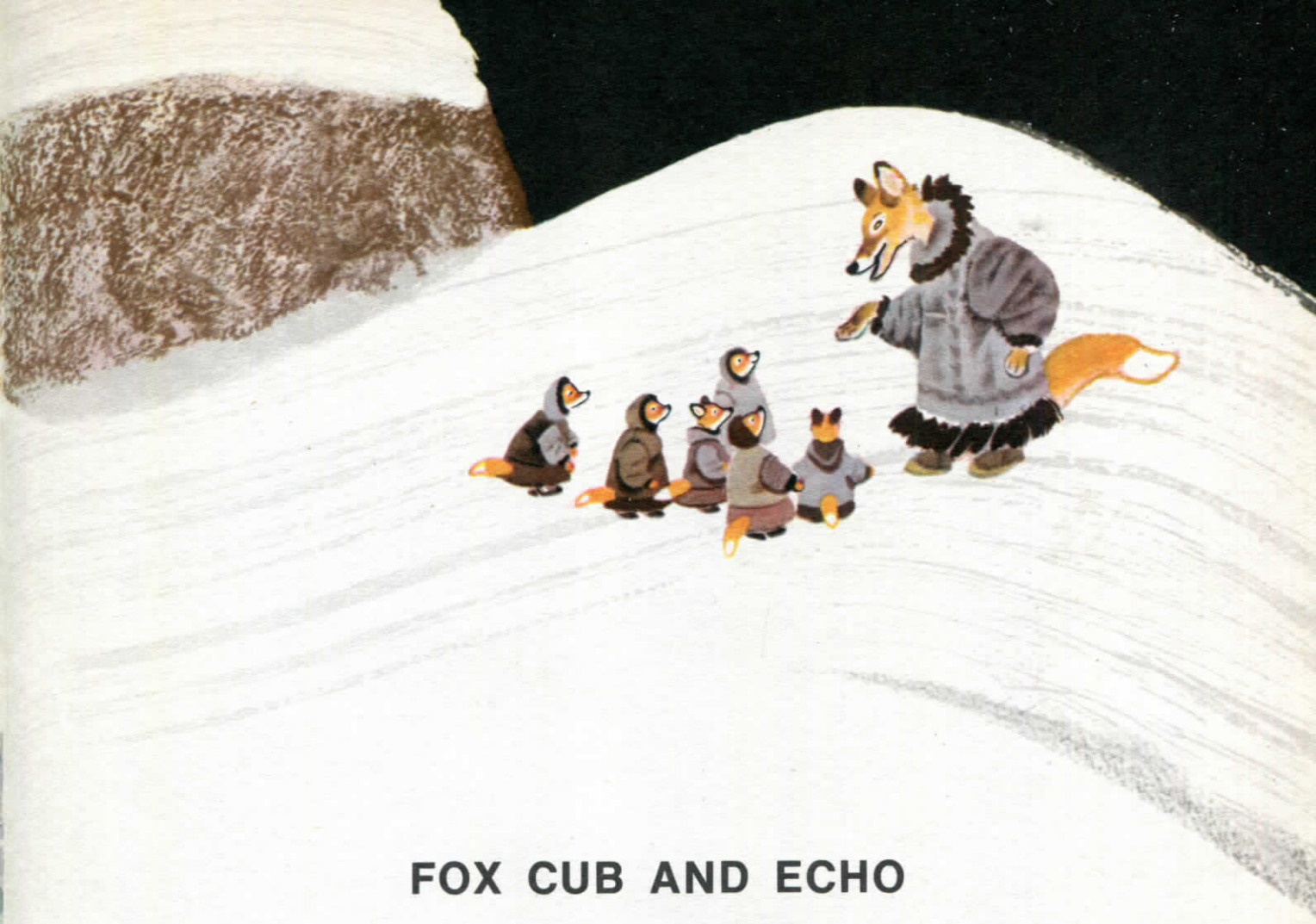
But there was no stopping Sikik.

The guests exchanged glances and began beating their tambourines, whistling and squeaking as loudly as they could in order to drown out her awful singing.

"What're you doing?" Sikik shouted angrily. "You're making so much noise I can't hear myself sing!"

"Then you're luckier than we are," the eldest of the guests replied, put down her tambourine and went home.





FOX CUB AND ECHO

Little Fox Cub was born into a red fox hunting family. He had three brothers and two sisters. They all had fluffy tails and reddish coats. They all barked loudly.

The family lived in a warm, dry burrow at the foot of a high hill. Beyond the hill were the great snow-capped mountains. The wind always howled there. Time and again their parents would say to them,

"When you grow up and are on your own you can go wherever you want to, but you may not go to the big mountains yet. There are avalanches there. If packed snow falls on you you'll be hurt and buried under it, and you'll never get out."

"All right," the cubs replied. "We won't go there in winter. We'll wait till summer when the snow's all melted."

"No," said their parents. "In summer rocks come rolling down the mountainside. A rock may seem wedged on a slope, but if Wind blows hard and starts it rolling it'll carry other rocks down with it. If you get caught under those raining rocks you'll be killed."



"All right, we won't go where there are avalanches in winter and rainfalls of rocks in summer," the cubs said.

But Little Fox Cub said to himself, "It's too long to wait till we grow up. They're just trying to scare us. Mountains aren't dangerous at all."

Winter passed, and the birds returned. Streams of melted snow water rushed down the mountainsides. Fox Cub gazed at them and said to himself, "What fine, tumbling streams these are. They're coming from the mountains. It must be lots of fun up there and not scarey at all. So what's there for me to be scared of? I guess I'm braver than my parents, because I'm not afraid of anything."



Fox Cub trotted off into the mountains. He stopped at the foot of a high crag and barked. "Yip! See how brave I am!"

Nearer Echo came right back at him: "Yip!" And it rolled off along the mountain tops: "Yip! Yip, yip..." The farther it rolled, the fainter it became.

"Oho!" Fox Cub said to himself. "Mountain looks big, but her voice is just like mine. It's even softer. So what's there to be scared of?" He yapped still louder then. "Oho! I'm brave! Yip! I'm not afraid of anything! Yip! My voice is louder than Mountain's! Yip! Yip!"

Echo rolled on and reached Wind. Mighty Wind became very angry.

"I'll teach that little braggart a lesson!" Wind said and blew hard, dislodging a huge rock. The rock came crashing down the slope, crushing everything in its wake.

"Who's that bragging? Who's that yapping?" Echo rumbled, repeating the crashing sound of the falling rocks. "Beware, if you value your life!" Echo thundered.

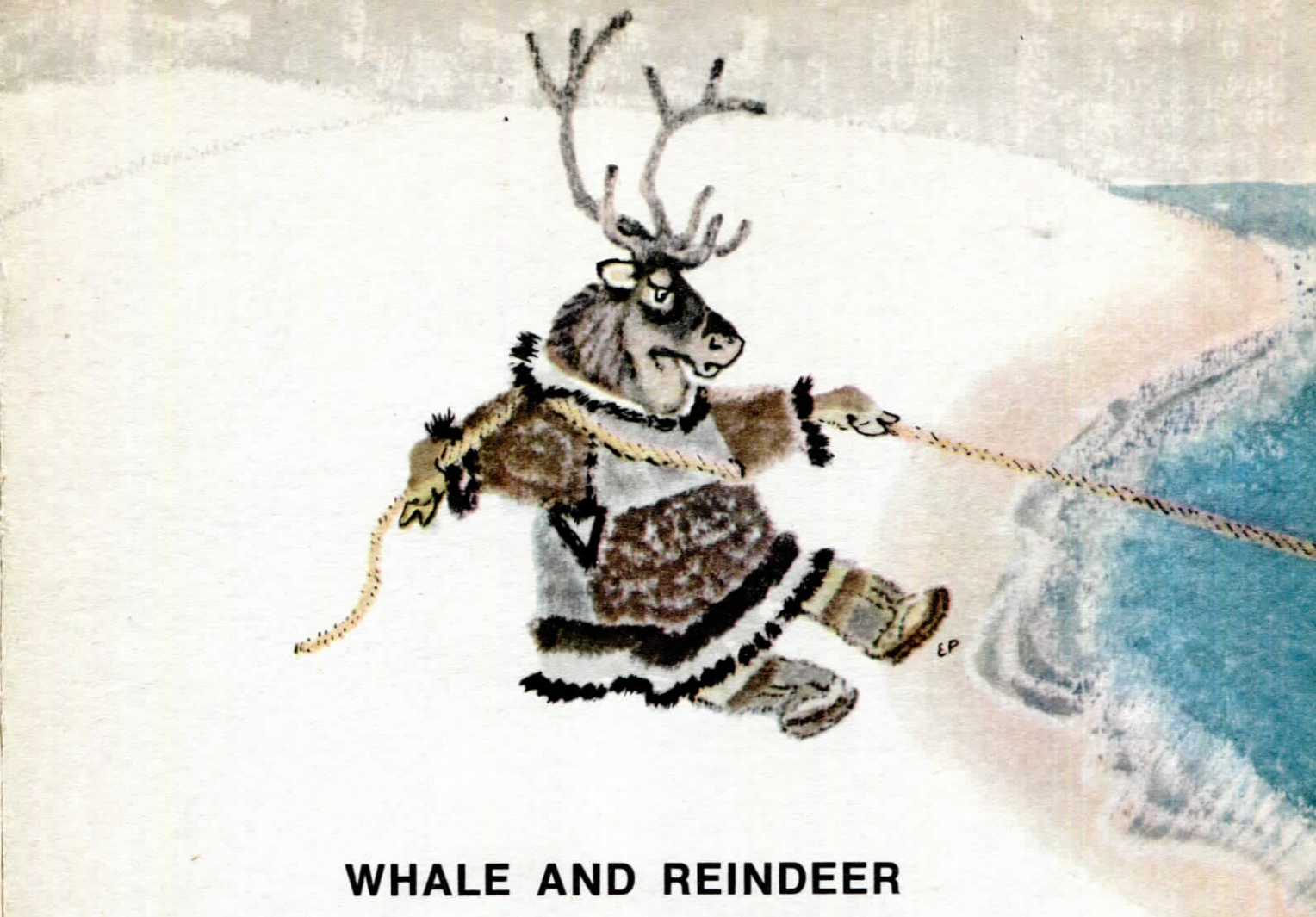
Fox Cub tucked his tail between his legs, flattened his ears, glanced around nervously and inched away towards the path.

"Uh... I just... I was just fooling," he yipped and streaked off so fast even Wind could not have caught up with him.

At last Fox Cub tumbled into his burrow. When he finally stopped panting he looked at his brothers and sisters and was about to say, "I went right up to Mountain and wasn't a bit scared." But all he actually said was, "Yip!"

That's because his teeth were still chattering.





WHALE AND REINDEER

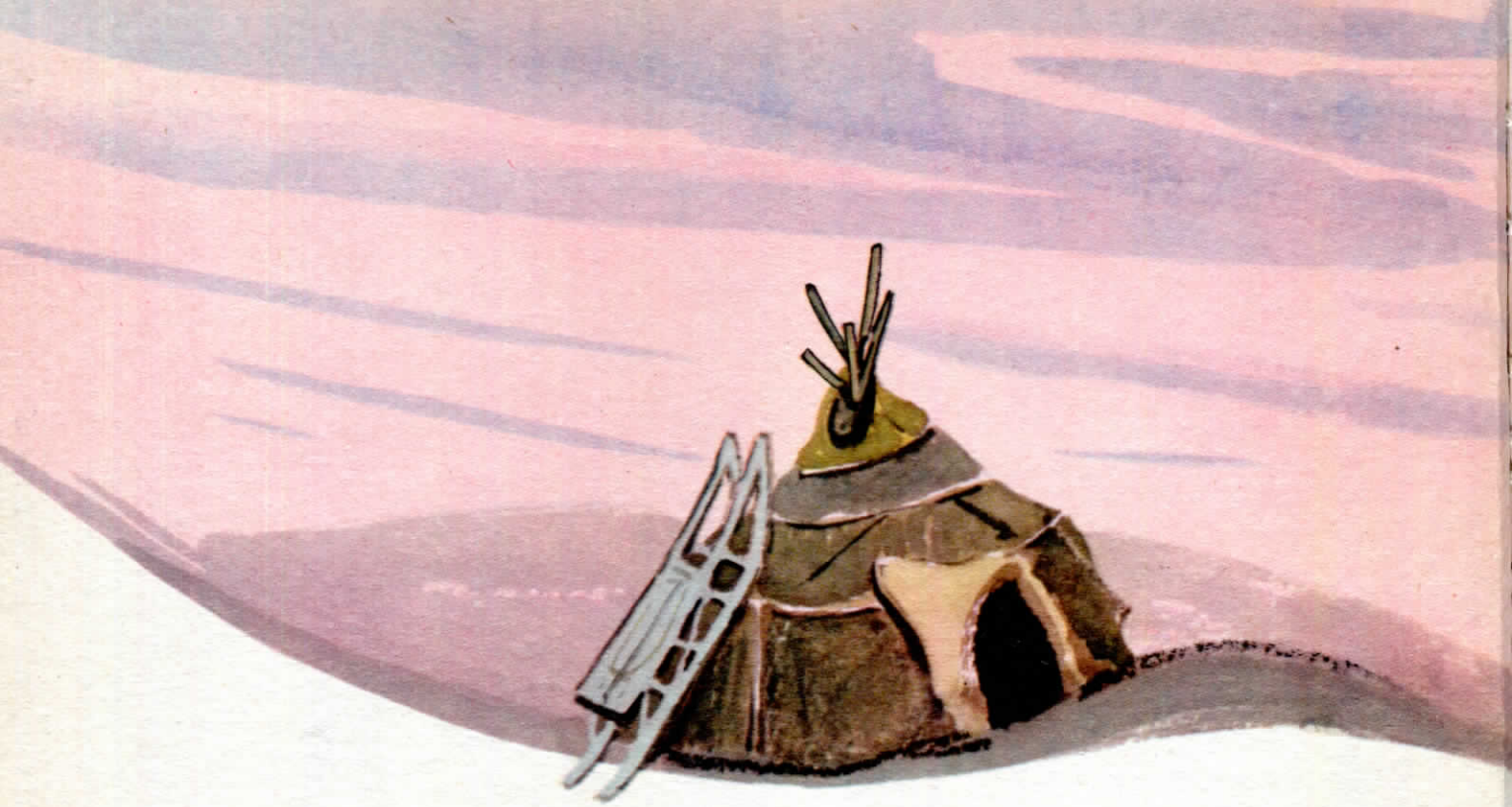
Reindeer was walking along the shore one day when Whale shouted,

"Hey, Reindeer! Let's have a tug-of-war."

"Let's!" Reindeer agreed.

Reindeer made a rope of grass, while Whale made one of seaweed. They tied the ends of the two ropes together. Reindeer wound the other end of his rope around his body. Whale wound the other end of his around his tail. Then they began to pull. Whale pulled out to sea, Reindeer pulled towards the tundra.

Whale's tail beat against the water, raising fountains of spray. Reindeer sank knee-deep into the ground, but still he wouldn't give in. Suddenly the rope snapped, sending Whale to the bottom of the sea and Reindeer flying off into the tundra. Reindeer has not lived at the seashore since then.



WOLF, RAVEN AND MOUNTAIN GOAT

Old Wolf and his sister had decided to move to a new home when Raven and Mountain Goat came calling. Each wanted to marry Wolf's sister.

"Hello," said Wolf.

"Hello," the two suitors replied.

"I'm glad you've come," Wolf said. "We were just getting ready to move. You can help."

After they'd moved and set up their tent again Wolf said,

"Go to the tundra for firewood, Raven, and we'll have tea."

Raven brought back a single twig, left it by the tent and went inside.

"Did you bring back any wood?" Wolf asked.

"Yes. I left it outside."

Wolf looked out, but saw nothing. "Where is it?"

Raven went out and pointed to the twig.

"That's not enough to build a fire."



"It's enough to boil a kettle," Raven replied huffily.

"Who else'll go for firewood?" Wolf asked.

"I will," Mountain Goat said. He came back with a load of dry wood.

"This is fine wood, and there's a lot of it," Wolf said.

After they set the kettle on to boil, Raven fell asleep. Soon the tea was ready. Wolf and Mountain Goat drank it all.

"Is it tea time?" Raven asked when he woke up.

"Yes."

"Well, then, let's have tea."

"We've had it," Wolf said.

The next morning Wolf said, "Who wants to marry my sister?"

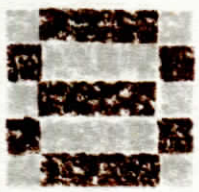
"I do!" Raven shouted.

"Oh, no. You don't know how to work. She'll die of hunger if she marries you."

"I do!" said Mountain Goat.

"Then you marry her. You're a good worker," Wolf said and gave his sister in marriage to Mountain Goat.

Raven wept bitter tears and flew off to the tundra.





WOLVERINE AND VIXEN

One day Old Wolverine decided that she and her husband would look for a new home. They had heard there were many birds and beasts across the river, and so the old couple decided to move their tent and belongings there.

Wolverine's husband went off to the woods for birch bark for a boat. His wife began packing. When she was done she sat down on the bank by her bundles to wait for her husband.

Soon a little boat came sailing by. Vixen was in it. She steered towards the bank and said, "Let me help you. I'll ferry your things across."



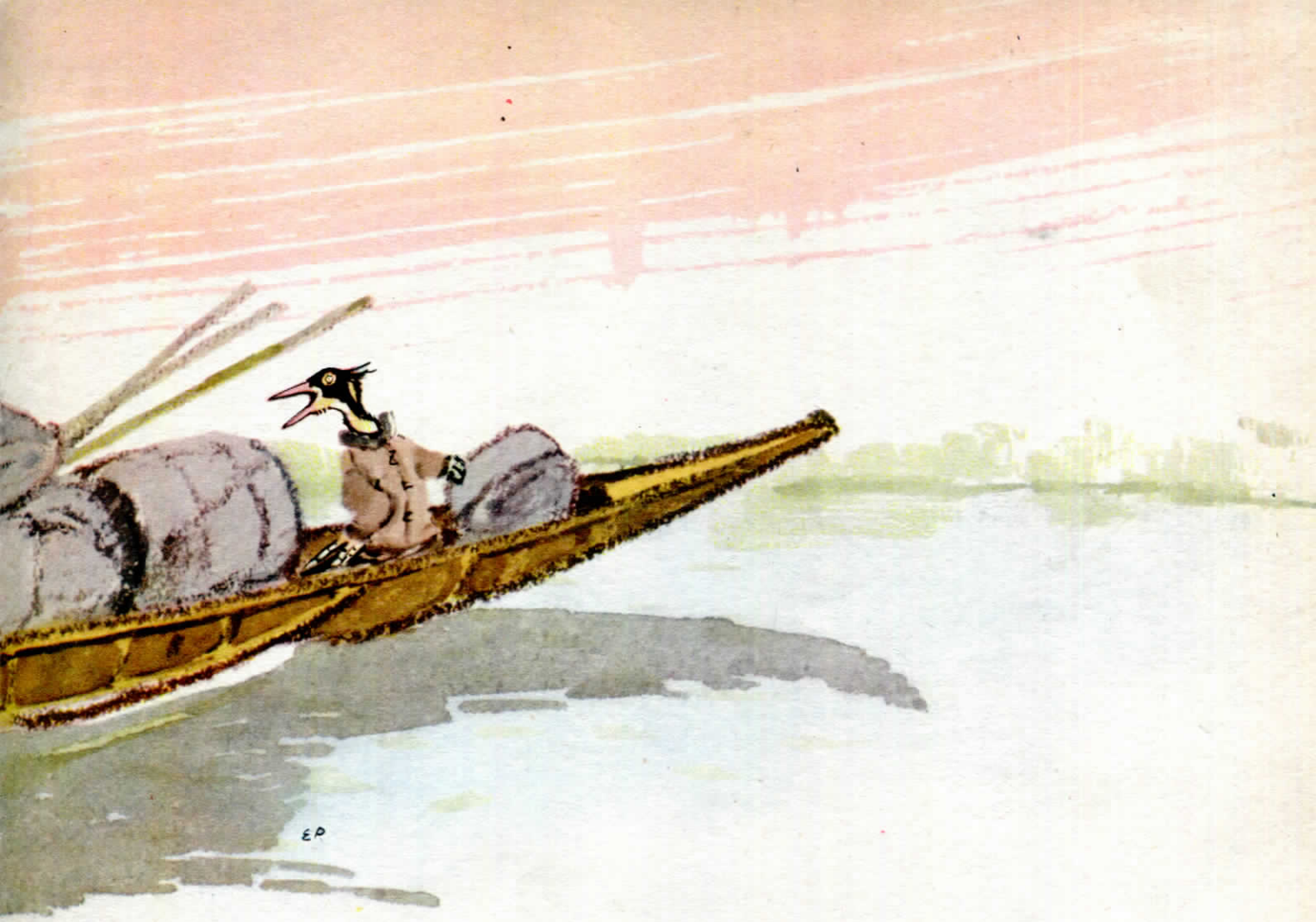


Wolverine was very pleased. She grabbed up her bundles and piled them into the boat. As she was about to get in on top of them Vixen said,

"Wait! Don't get in. We'll sink if you do. I'll ferry your things across first and then come back for you."

Vixen pushed off, but she floated downstream with the current instead of paddling across to the other bank. The boat sailed farther and farther away. When Wolverine finally realized that Vixen had tricked her she sat down on a rock by the water's edge and wept bitterly.

Woodpecker was flying by just then. He heard Wolverine weeping, listened to her story and flew off after Vixen, heading



straight across the woods to a large cape. There he settled on a bush by the water, broke off some twigs and waited for Vixen to sail round the bend.

When Vixen's boat came abreast of the bush Woodpecker said, "Will you give me a ride?"

"All right. Hop in," Vixen said.

Woodpecker hid behind Wolverine's bundles so that Vixen would not see him.

They sailed on, with Vixen in the stern and Woodpecker pecking away softly at the bottom of the boat in the bow. He soon made a hole in the thin birch bark. Water began seeping in through the hole.

"Have we sprung a leak?" Vixen asked anxiously.

"Yes. A seam must've split. We'd better tie up," Woodpecker said.

When they reached the bank Vixen jumped out and said, "You take out the bundles. I'll go to the woods for some fir sap. We can sail on again as soon as we stop up the hole."

The moment Vixen disappeared into the woods Woodpecker bent each of his twigs in two and made a plug to stop up the hole. Then he got into the boat and paddled back to Wolverine.

When Vixen came trotting out of the woods with some fir sap she saw that the boat was sailing away.

"You thief! Come back, Woodpecker!"

"No, Vixen. These aren't your things," Woodpecker replied.

At last he reached Wolverine's tent. The old couple were happy to see him.

"What'll kind Woodpecker's reward be?" they said.

Old Wolverine made Woodpecker a suede jacket. She tinted it with colored clay and then made him a bright hat.

Woodpecker looked wonderful in his new clothes.

Old Wolverine's husband was a fine smith. He made Woodpecker a steel beak and talons to match.

Ever since then Woodpecker has been brightly dressed and can drill a hole in even the stoutest tree with his steel beak.





FOX AND THE TEALS

One day Sly Fox was walking along the shore. "No animal is smarter than me. No animal is more crafty than me!" he was saying to himself.

Some teals were swimming nearby. They spotted Fox and decided to play a trick on him. Elder Teal said,

"Let's make a boat of our wings, brothers. We'll line up, two abreast, and each'll spread out his inside wing. Fox'll think we're a boat."

No sooner said than done. They lined up two abreast and each spread out a wing. Now they looked like a boat. Their outside wings looked like oars. As they floated along Elder Teal called out,

"One, two! One, two! Pull on those oars!"

Fox was old and couldn't see as well as he once could. It seemed to him a boat with rowers in it was sailing by. Fox stopped and shouted, "Ahoy, there! Pull up and take me aboard! Can't you see who I am? I'm the master hereabouts! Can't you see I'm awfully tired?"



The teals headed in to shore. Fox climbed into their midst, sat down, puffed out his chest, fluffed his tail and closed his eyes contentedly. The boat moved quickly away from the shore. All of a sudden Fox heard Elder Teal say,

"Let's fly now, brothers. We've had enough of swimming."

A moment later Fox found himself in the water. The teals were winging away. Fox paddled back to shore, saying to himself, "Those teals tricked me. They've disgraced me."

It was hard going, for Fox's wet tail was pulling him down. "My beautiful tail, don't let me down now. Help me reach shore!" he said.

So Fox's tail became a rudder.

Fox barely made it back to the shore. He climbed a little hill and sat down to dry in the sun.

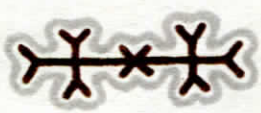
Meanwhile, the teals were flying over the tundra, telling everyone of the cold bath they'd given Fox.

Fox looked around and saw a great number of large and small animals. They'd all gathered round and were laughing at him.

"Hey, Fox, won't you tell us how the teals dunked you in the icy sea?" they teased.

Fox shook himself, clamped his wet tail between his teeth to make the going easier and dashed off as fast as he could into the tundra. He was burning up with shame.

Fox has stopped coming down to the seashore since then.





FRIENDSHIP BUILDS STRENGTH

The north seas are cold. In winter they are white. No water can be seen, for ice and snow stretch off into the distance. All along the coast snow blankets a vast area known as the tundra.

Farther south mighty forests cover thousands of kilometers of land. This is the taiga. In winter the rivers of the taiga freeze over and the sun is rarely seen. Now and then the dark sky will suddenly become lit up by an unusual play of shimmering, wavering color. This is the aurora borealis, the northern lights.

The winters here are long and bitter cold with frequent snowstorms.

During the short summer months everything comes to life, for at this time of the year the sun never sets. Millions of migratory birds return to the coastal tundra in summer. Among them are geese, ducks, swans, gulls, snow buntings and many, many others. This is where they build their nests.

The first warm rays bring forth grass and bushes. Each is in a hurry to send out its shoots and leaves, and then its blossoms and berries, since the summer is so very short. There are cranberries, blueberries and cloudberries everywhere.

This is a happy time for the reindeer. Their favorite food, reindeer moss, appears as soon as the snow melts.

However, even at the height of the beautiful northern summer a sudden snowstorm may make everything white again. Such is the North.

* * *

Strong, brave people live in the North. Summer and winter they hunt in the sea and the taiga. They tend great herds of reindeer in the tundra.

Yakuts, Koryaks, Chukchas, Eskimos, Itelmens, Evenks, Nentsy, Nanaitsy and many other peoples inhabit the northern regions of the Soviet Union.

The October Revolution changed the life of these peoples.

There were no schools here, so that neither children nor grownups could read or write. There were no doctors to help them if they were sick.

Then schools and hospitals were built. Teachers and doctors came to these parts. Electricity, radios and movies appeared. Roads were built. Helicopters and airplanes now ply regular routes to these remote areas, bringing food, newspapers, medicine, toys, films, books, clothing and many other things to the people of the North.

* * *

The North is a harsh country, but it is rich in beautiful furs and in countless treasures that lay buried for centuries in the icy, snow-covered and swampy lands. Geologists discovered this treasure store of gold, diamonds, coal and oil, and a great construction program was begun.

People from all over the Soviet Union come to the North to work at the new sites. They learn to live in this harsh climate, to build in a way that will preserve the wildlife of the forests and the rivers. The people of the North teach them this. In turn, they learn to use modern machines and acquire new skills.

Today the peoples of the North are no longer simply good hunters, fishermen and reindeer breeders. They are skilled workers, doctors, teachers, scientists and writers. One must never forget that 60 years ago these peoples did not even have an alphabet. There is an Evenk saying: "Friendship builds strength".

Today there are great electric power stations and large modern cities in the North. In the villages people are moving into warm, comfortable homes, leaving the tents they have always lived in.

* * *

The way of life of the peoples of the Far North has changed greatly, but they have not forgotten their ancient songs and dances, stories and legends. The local bone-carvers are famous for their figurines of people and animals. As always, the women adorn the clothing they wear with beautiful fur designs, each of which has its own name: "hare ears", "reindeer antlers", "fox's chest" and others.

According to an ancient northern custom, people gathered and made merry after a lucky hunt, or in winter when snowstorms raged and they were forced to wait for calmer weather. This was the time for story-telling.

The best story-tellers were always greatly respected, since these peoples had no written books. A story-teller had to know many fables and legends by heart. Besides, he had to tell a story well, to make it interesting. He also had to have a pleasant voice. The story-teller was treated to the best food. Many people gathered round to hear his tales. An Eskimo hunter named Kivagme was one of these fine story-tellers

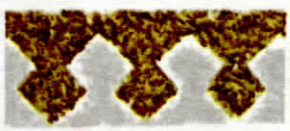
whose name has come down to us. Several of his tales have been included in this book.

Nothing will escape a hunter's keen eye. He sees a mouse drinking water and notices the way its nose will wiggle as it drinks. He sees a fox twitching its furry tail and a bear turning sharply at the sound of some ptarmigans flying up from a thicket.

The tundra and taiga have always been full of birds and beasts. This is why so many stories of the North are about animals and why the animals in them resemble humans in every way: they live in tents, ride in reindeer sleds and cross rivers in boats.

These stories praise honesty, courage and common-sense and disapprove of idle talk, bragging and, especially, laziness. All were handed down from generation to generation.

This edition has been illustrated by Yevgeny Rachov, People's Artist of the RSFSR, known for his many fine illustrations of folk tales and children's books.





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KUTKHA THE RAVEN

Translated by Fainna Solasko
Illustrated by **Y. Rachov**

Printed in the USSR

₹ 1.0 0



